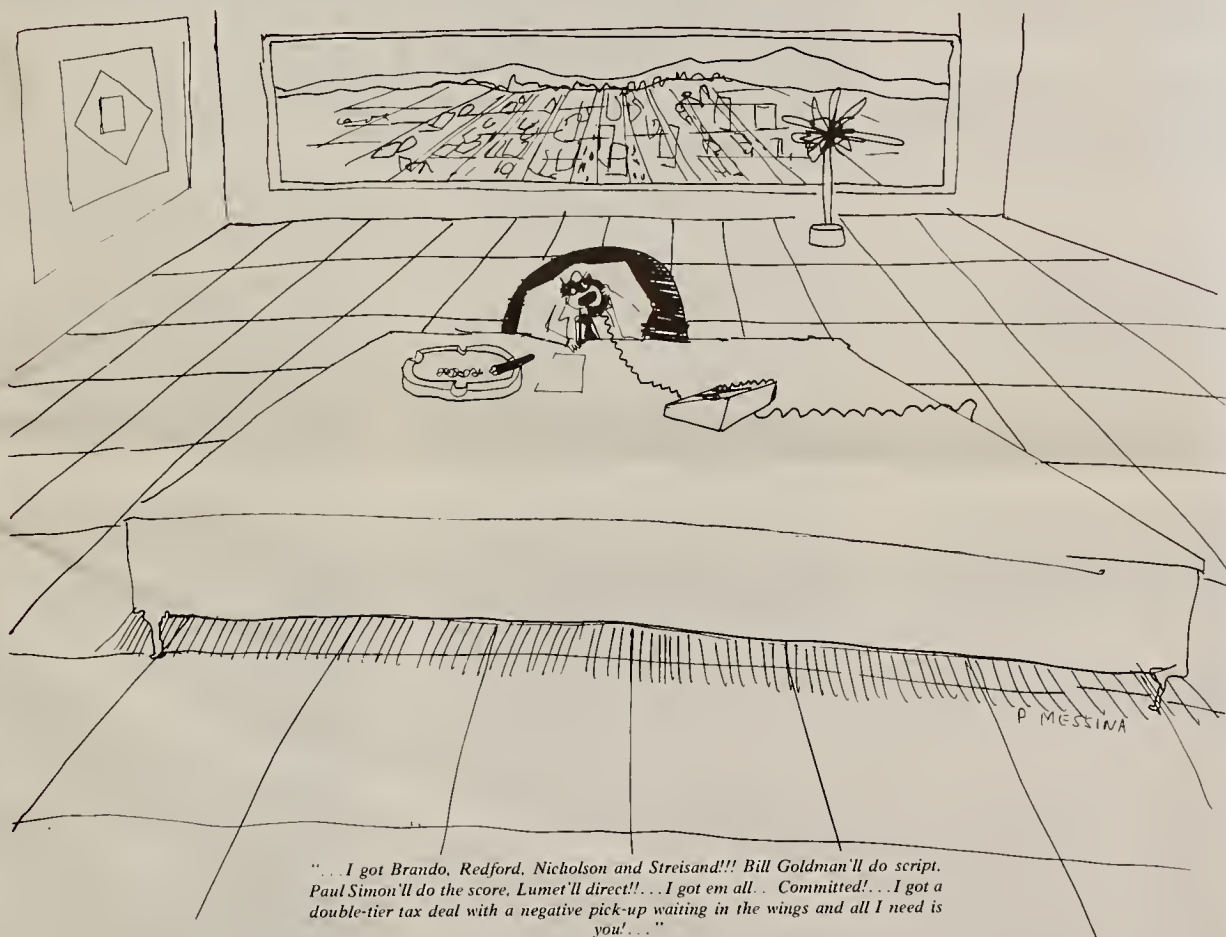


The Independent GAZETTE

Journal of Independent Film and Video Artists

50¢



"... I got Brando, Redford, Nicholson and Streisand!!! Bill Goldman'll do script. Paul Simon'll do the score, Lumet'll direct!!... I got em all... Committed!... I got a double-tier tax deal with a negative pick-up waiting in the wings and all I need is you!..."

White Ox Films: Funding the Future

WOMEN ALIVE!
Interview with Joan Shigekawa

Other Ideas: Ed Lynch

published by the

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.

The Independent GAZETTE

Journal of Independent Film and Video Artists
Journal for Moving Image Artists

Vol. 1, No. 1 July, 1976

Editor: Ted Churchill

Associate Editor: Thomas Lennon

Executive Editor: John Hiller

Contributing Editors: Ed Lynch, Tom McDonough

Design: Deborah Thomas, Ted Churchill

Typesetting: Myrna Zimmerman

The INDEPENDENT GAZETTE is published by the Association of Independent Video & Filmmakers, Inc.

This first issue of the INDEPENDENT GAZETTE was made possible by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.

AIVF Board of Directors, 1976-77

Ed Lynch, President

Ted Churchill

Maxi Cohen

Martha Coolidge, Chairperson

Charles Levine

Larry Loewinger, Treasurer

Phillip Messina

Alan Miller

Kitty Morgan

Amalie Rothschild, Vice-President

Marc Weiss

The Association is a not-for profit organization incorporated in New York State in July, 1974.

The Association is partially supported by the National Endowment for the Arts Public Media Program and the New York State Council on the Arts.

© Copyright 1976 by Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Inc. No portion of this magazine may be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without written permission from the publisher

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

This is the first issue of the INDEPENDENT GAZETTE. It is an extension of the work of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers Inc. in New York and is published through the participation and volunteer work of its membership as a service to and reflection of the independent film and video community.

The independent community began in New York City: it had to. Whatever may be said about our city, it is brutally real. New Yorkers know that the problems are not going to go away by themselves. We are learning a hard lesson and that lesson is teaching us that the rebirth of our city (and our country) depends on the rebirth of the community. Like the city, independent film and video artists are not assured of survival. The mechanism for that survival can only be created by ourselves. And it depends as much upon our successful communication with one another (our willingness to help one another) as it does on successful communication between us and our audiences. The creation of the AIVF was the beginning of that process. In the last two and a half years as our numbers increased we have experienced the growth of our strength, a vital crossflow of information, a sense of belonging and our development as a force for change. It has been a good feeling.

As independent artists we speak individually through our work. Collectively we speak through our community and this newspaper. But we don't just speak about our films and tapes just as we don't make films and tapes simply about the process. Our work reflects our lives and visions as well as the lives and visions of others. be it in narrative or abstract, documentary or theatrical form. In this respect, whether or not you are a member of the AIVF, or even an independent film or video artist, the INDEPENDENT GAZETTE can be your newspaper as well.

The INDEPENDENT GAZETTE has the potential to become an essential element in the growth of the independent community. But to do this it must be an accurate and representative reflection of that community; not just in the city, but the state and country. We need a broad range of input, ideas and opinion. I hope you will consider the GAZETTE your newspaper and use it as such. We are all independent and we now have another vehicle for that vital expression.

Ted Churchill

CONTENTS

Organism: An Interview with Hillary Harris	1
Newsletter Discards and Other Ideas by Ed Lynch	2
A Conversation with Barbara Haspiel	4
Not a Pretty Picture by Martha Coolidge	5
Making Friends with Super-8 by Mark Mikolas	6
WOMAN ALIVE! An Interview with Joan Shigekawa	7
Video Systems by Alan Miller	10
Indies Present Indies	14
Film as Business by Freude	15
Copyright: All Rights Reserved by Thomas Lennon	17
"Comin' Home" (Box Office, That Is) by Kitty Morgan	20
White Ox Films: Funding the Future by David Tulbert	21
Metroliner: A Review by Charles Levine	24
The Closet Machinist by Ted Churchill	25

The Association gratefully acknowledges those whose contributions made possible the First Annual Awards Dinner for independent film and video.

Sustaining Members

Mrs. Ethel Altschuler
Eastman Kodak Co.
Mr. E. David Rosen
Mr. Daniel Sandberg

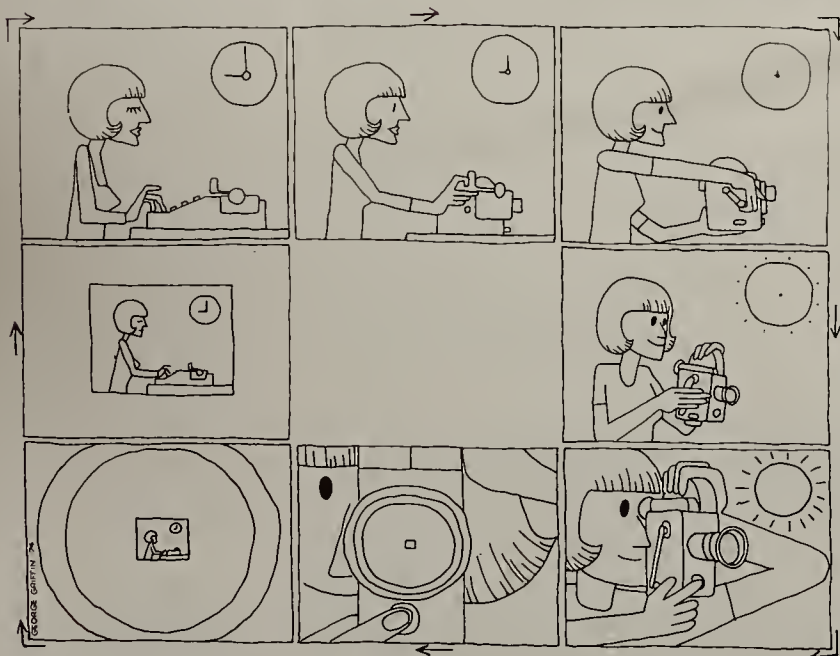
Supporting Members

Albert G. Ruben Co.
Aquarius Transfer
Mr. Larry Mischel
Trans/Audio Corp.

Associate Members

Accurate Film Labs
Back Stage
Bebell, Inc.
Berkey Marketing Co.
Cinelab Corp.
Mr. Joseph Dragi
Film Counselors, Inc.
Gary Youngman Co.
Mr. H. J. Goldstein
Guffanti Film Labs
J. G. Films
Midwest Film Prods.
Millimeter
Nehls & O'Connell, Inc.
Plastic Reel Corp.
Professional Films
Quality Film Labs
Mr. Irving Rathner
Mrs. Samuel Rosen
Shell Paper and Cordage Co.
Vacuumate Corp.

How then to acknowledge the legions of unpaid people whose volunteer energies have enabled the Association to survive and grow in its first two years? To list all those who have given of their time and intelligence is an undertaking too vast to consider. Members have made speeches, brewed coffee, answered phones, sat through six-hour meetings, donated their films or tapes to be screened, stuffed envelopes, drafted statements, served on the Board, been ruled out of order, driven across town and country in the middle of the night, formed committees, transcribed tapes, turned their living-room couches into beds, borrowed their relatives' trucks and typewriters, come to the Association meetings to speak and share their expertise... unsung heroes and heroines....





ORGANISM:

From Time Compression to Time Capsule

An Interview with Hilary Harris

Interview by Ted Churchill
 Transcriptions and editing by John Hiller

Organism is a macrocosmic view of New York City which makes an analogy between living tissue and the structure of the city. Traffic arteries are seen as the bloodstream circulating through the urban body and its skyscrapers as the skeletal structure. The city's escalators, streets, railroad lines, shops, markets, bridges, beaches and parades are seen as parts of a delicately balanced living structure.

TC: In terms of production, *Organism* is very unique. I'd like you to talk about how it was done technically and what it meant to you.

HH: I got into film through abstract films. I like to bring that up because people don't think of me in that field since I haven't done abstract films for a long time. My second film, *Generation*, was a completely abstract film of a kaleidoscope pattern and a very key film for me; I learned a lot making it. It took me a year to make and it only lasts three minutes. It was, or sort of formed for me, a kind of "essence" basis for my approach to film.

I'm often doing research on a kinetic generator which I hope, eventually, will evolve and allow me to do abstract films again. But I'm not ready to do that now. This gets complicated because at the same time I set up the studio I emerged with this idea for a feature film on New York City. It was fourteen years ago, right around 1962. I have put together various sketches for that film. I've shown them. I had a Lincoln Center showing sometime in '66 and then showed them in a Parks Festival a couple of years later. It kept evolving, and I have copies of those work prints. It's kind of interesting—when I get to a certain stage, I do a quarter-inch track. I do my own mixing on quarter-inch. It's not like a perfect locked-in sync, but it's close enough since I'm not using lip-sync in the film. Then, before I tear the work print apart, I make a slop copy of the work print which matches the track.

Anyway, the film hasn't changed in its basic intent, which is to capture, to try to capture, what a city is really about on a certain gut and cerebral level, a combination gut/cerebral level. It's an attempt to have a holistic view of where we are in the city. It doesn't attempt to be a document; it attempts to be an interpretation, a crystallization of reality, so that after you've seen it you can relate to the city better, you can understand it better. That's the theory. And you can also take responsibility for it; that's the ultimate aim. You know, we're in a place that we're creating every minute, and we have to realize that, and we have to realize that it is alienating but also something we have to take responsibility for. It's too easy to become alienated and rejected, and I want a sense of involvement with it. So, I'm looking at a lot of positive and

negative aspects of the city and trying to just grasp the physical complexity of it, just on that level, to show that we're all embedded in a symbiosis.

Now *Organism* represents one of the themes of the big film, what I call a time/space theme. It's the most distant view of the city that you can get. It's like one of those aerial shots of seeing the islands lying there surrounded by the water and just contemplating the physicality of it and the mechanistic life of it on a purely kind of mechanistic/biological level. I tend to think of the city as *nature*, a physical kind of *nature*. I don't make a dichotomy between the city and the country because it is a special kind of nature and it has beauties, and I'm trying to bring up some of those beauties. I think that helps us to love it better and to relate to it better. So *Organism* looks at this very distant view and sort of gives you a super perspective which gives you a special relationship. In the big film, that will be one strand, one theme.

Now the next thing I want to do is on the work symbiosis, the work activity, the incredible way that we all depend on each other for life and existence in the city. We sort of take it for granted that we can go out and buy paper, a pack of cigarettes, a pencil, just like that on the corner without thinking that maybe half a million people made it possible and that it's all a part of this enormous service system that has evolved for the city. It's going to be a kind of lyric view of it, but it will be a more intimate, down-to-earth view than *Organism* is. But it won't be as intimate as the other themes in the film I want to get to after that one. I want to get into a social and political aspect of the city—the human struggle to try to progress, to emerge, to become on a social level and citywide level, and then, lastly, the most intimate level, which is the personal, the struggle to become. To do that, I'm going to get into intimate discussions between people, probably all in off-screen dialogue, in a kind of poetic juxtaposition where the personal problems also reflect the broader social problems and they all interconnect and everything starts weaving in and out. But the theme of human struggle coming through it all and moving toward the climax of the film...we're led gradually toward an abyss of not knowing what the hell we're doing. And that's part of any creative process I find when I do a film. I find a lot of people share that with me, that we're willing to go through a place where we don't know what we're doing, where the struggle, whether it's personal, social, or aesthetic, is a blind kind of struggle, and the answers just don't come. We've got to be willing to suffer that anxiety; if we do, the answers come out and then there's a rebirth of energy, a new seeing, a new integration, and then a kind of celebration as a result of that. And that's the philosophical structure of the

film. A very difficult concept and one which will be interesting to get across on film without screen dialogue. I've done quite a few experiments with it, and I know I'm on the right track, but it's still quite a challenge to get it done.

Anyway, does that give you a sense of where *Organism* came from?

TC: It does.

HH: Where it wants to go?

TC: Yes. Your whole film, though, is not going to be in stop motion, is it?

HH: Oh, no. No, no. It'll...as a matter of fact, I'm dying to get back to live action photography because the camera movement is one of the expressive tools of the filmmaker for me. And that's why *Organism* was quite frustrating at times and the reason I went to the extent of building some of the special equipment.

TC: Special equipment?

HH: Yes. The camera is basically a recording device, and the way we can get expression into that recording device is to move the camera, follow our subjects, work in counterpoint with the movement, in sympathy with the movement. Perspective, lens change, angles, and so on, all have to do with the aesthetics of cinematography and the expressive qualities that come through those decisions and choices. When we go into editing, it's again recreated through the movement possibilities of editing.

On the other hand, like during a stop-motion film like *Organism*, it got very frustrating for me not to be able to move the camera because basically you usually lock down a camera and look at a scene that's taking place. It has kinetic elements in it, but I was dying to do a sweep over the city with the camera and zoom in on some specific things and zoom back. So I built a tripod. In my original budget to the NEA, I actually put down something like twelve hundred bucks to develop a special rig; it took a lot more money than that to do it, actually. First of all, I built a camera, which is a bit unique. I didn't build the whole camera, just a drive for an old Newman-Sinclair camera which has a nice steady pull down, a stationary registration pin, and it's a 35mm camera. By the way, this is almost all shot in 35. There are a few things that have been blown up from 16. But in this camera I put in a motor drive with clutches and timers and switches so I could select whether the camera was going to be... well, let me say it this way: what I could do with it was stop it in either shutter-closed or shutter-opened position. It gave me the option to have a time exposure at anywhere from two to twenty seconds on each frame of film. That's why you get those exposures at night. And I had two timers, one for the

continued on page 28

NEWSLETTER DISCARDS AND OTHER IDEAS

by Ed Lynch

Science fiction and art—an unlikely combination. I don't know if the galaxy contains such a story, but it would have been helpful as a model for this one. Though this is sort of an essay, and partly a story, it is more an attempt to talk about the whole thing: a philosophical sketch of the life and times of the independent motion picture maker and artist (film and video are both motion pictures) on this planet, in this country, primarily in this New York City, at this time.

Of course, if I lack traditional credentials for a project this comprehensive, perhaps no one else has them either. A good generalist, like the mythical country doctor, is hard to find. As a filmmaker and cameraman, I did travel a lot, careening through airports that looked alike and motels that smelled alike into homes, offices, factories hospitals, churches, bars, and backrooms, catching images and interviews with Senators, bums, beauty queens, alligator poachers, steel workers, scientists, poets, surgeons, quacks, prostitutes, drug addicts, kids, cooks, fighters, rock stars, and countless other queer-and-straight, lost-and-found characters across the strange and lovely country we call America. That's my resume, along with my own miscellaneous son-of-the-country backyard that began a stone's throw from the Pittsburgh steel mills, a bit of hard-earned street-smarts, and a sociologist's passions for figuring out what it's all about.

My intention from the beginning was to make the following effort fun—at least as much fun as looking at you, me, and our technological art form with good humor. And that, it strikes me, is very serious business. On a field as broad and undefined as ours, the problems of composition are no less difficult than those of life itself. The extraordinary number of unruly parts of our Twentieth Century lives would tax the skills of President Ford's Secret Service to wrestle them to the ground. I have no such elevated or athletic ambitions. Instead, I admit to a need to share my experiences and perspectives, a need that is as fundamental as any biological urge.

The need to discuss, the need to plan, the need to clarify, the need to understand what we are doing as craftspeople, artists and citizens is primary. Our own kine-kinetic (!) corner tends to be totally absorbing, especially because it is coupled to an ever-present need to survive. No matter how captivating our work is, it is not enough. We need to understand, to clarify our relationship to our culture (such as it is) whose hot breath is never more than a few inches from the back of our necks, just so that we can work with our heads clear. It is not easy to do, and is generally put aside until there is enough time to do it right. When is that? Doctors cannot keep up with their journals, asphalt crews cannot keep up with the potholes, garbagemen cannot keep up with the packaging industry, scientists cannot even catalogue the newly synthesized substances. Businessmen, politicians, and labor leaders play a polite game of blindman's bluff and the honest mechanic has his hand in the air. No bad kid is needed to kick in our house of blocks. It is already down and we are all up to our knees.

Urgency is terribly subjective. The questions that we need to ask ourselves may have answers as remote and unknowable as the ozone layer, but no less serious. Is the "milk" already spilled, or just being spilled? Are the doomsayers creating hopelessness? Are the positivists silly Pollyannas? And why does "Who's in charge here?" always get a laugh? Because everyone knows it's no one.

Our daily reflector, our technological mirror, television, should tell us something about an emergency. Walter Cronkite is "buddies" with half the country. His sedentary and imperturbable image tells us that

he's not really worried. Perhaps not, but that might well be more a function of his personal economics than any real confidence in the wisdom of his network. Behind his show is a broadcasting corpus that has more tight asses, more broken psyches, more ulcers, and more suicides than all the daily soap operas combined.* Their daily executive diet of programming and advertising decisions is an embarrassment to one of our deepest traditions: an honest day's work.

When things are so obviously crazy, in the cultural sense, the hardest thing to do is to stay connected. There are so many good, solid reasons to think only about yourself. It is almost impossible to think globally, to remember that we are a space ship. If our own survival were as internally supportive as an organic farm, it might make sense to attempt to ignore the "big picture." Our form is basically public, the public is basically changing. What is our part?

As citizens we took action and defeated the legislation for an Independent American Film Institute, and we have worked for change in the proposed copyright legislation. If we understand that it is possible to defeat and change our government's actions, then it is



only half-a-hair to knowing that we can stop a lot of other things too. Maybe we can convince our legislators that there are many more enlightened things to do with our money. Maybe we can use our art form for change as well as art.

Government is just one part, albeit an extremely powerful part of our culture. If we are to strengthen our connection to the many parts of our culture and our country, it can only happen if we believe that we can change it. We must understand how our work affects our audiences. We have no history, no catechism. Ralph Nader admits that his consumer movement asks people to think, even though he knows that history has always supported movements that have asked people to believe. We need to do both: think and believe. In order to do either we must be connected.

On a Labor Day, way back in those days, I was returning from Horse Head Beach on the Connecticut Turnpike, slowing coming down from acid. I felt vulnerable. The realities were coming on, and I stayed around 55. The super-highway was, and only the cliché will do, bumper to bumper. Thousands of us

*I remember shooting a piece with a well-known NBC newscaster who daily, with aplomb and perfect deadpan, delivered the good and the bad news. Privately he worried that all the new, and huge, heavy buildings at 6th Ave. and 51st Street would collapse the earth's crust and bury him.

rolled into a toll plaza that could handle less than half our swarm. Using my crafty, hard-won education on toll-booth flow, I took aim for the far right, knowing that most of the drivers think the automatic lanes are faster. They are, of course, but because everyone thinks they are, they are not. My lane was much shorter but still 20 or 30 cars. I nudged closer.

The quarter-collector, a young man of about 19, moved swiftly in and out of his booth working the change, the space, the different hands and windows with amazing speed. I slipped onto the concrete and offered a quarter. He reached for my hand before I had stopped, took the nickel and copper sandwich so quickly, so efficiently that just in order to do my quid pro quo I had to immediately release the brake and step on the gas. I did. But not before I had, in the miraculously fractured moment at his door, and through my still hyper-sensitive, half-blown mind, a genuine, time-honored acid-flash.

That young, 19-year-old kid was not just a technician, executing his winning personality on a dull, hard, repetitious job. Pay and time-cards had no meaning. He was wired into the whole contraptive mass of people, transportation modules and exhaust fumes. He had agreed to make the whole unforgivable American freeway nightmare his own. He didn't want me to stop. He was in a mad, desperate attempt to help the nearly helpless through his toll booth, down the highway, out of their cars and into their homes. I slid off the concrete pad and burst into tears.

Oh God! What was it that allowed that kid to desert his own skin and take such a huge, preposterous mistake to his very own soul? It was a modern-day miracle because every elevator operator, taxi driver, cop, butcher, bus-boy, go-go girl and politician knows better. They don't plug in because they already "know" there is nothing to be done. They aren't connected. They don't believe in change.

Well, as in most acid flashes, it tells you more about the viewer than the viewee. I did, and I do cry for the heart of a boy, or girl, who instinctively believes that there is something that can be done. If you live in the city long enough, you try to forgive the pervasive cynicism and want to love the people who are a part of your daily life just to avoid burning up in your own hate and frustration. You look for the person beneath the carnage, the timid survivor beneath the damaged exterior. So be it. But if you take a trip out of the city and run smack into a natural, innocent, heart-on-the-sleeve refusal to disengage, it can be very powerful indeed. And it was.

I admit to a day-to-day struggle to continue to care about what happens to the whole thing. For most of my life it has been the easiest thing in the world to feel a part of everything else: hunger, poverty, stupidity and all the nice things too. I feel pride in the profound humanity that New Yorkers showed during the massive blackout, but I have not had a day when I have not remembered that we are the world's greatest seaport and the Hudson is too filthy for swimming and fishing. I felt in personal, daily pain from the moment that Tricky Dick became my President. So it was natural for me to choose what I called the most powerful art form, film, for my vocation. It was easy for me to expect that I could help gear up for national enlightenment and social change.

It didn't sound naive then, although I didn't go around saying all those things out loud. We hadn't had the second chapter of Harvest of Shame. (Chet Huntley did a memorial documentary on migrant workers exactly ten years after Murrow. The conditions were just as bad if not worse.) Many of us were in the first blush of cinema verité. We were going to be able to share our intimate perceptions. And once those millions of Fellow-Americans saw what we saw, crystalized and carefully honed to show the unvarnished truth, they, and then we, would have to

"As independents our choices cannot be any simpler than our culture, no more pure than the Mississippi. But we are and will remain victims of the 'culture' as long as we do not have a vision, as long as we do not have reliable magic of our own."

stop making all those embarrassing mistakes. The logic, or the lesson, no matter if it was abstract, would be stimulating to action. In a short period of time, certainly in my lifetime (!), social justice would take enormous strides forward if not to some sort of mini-climax: bring up the music, light up the rainbows. I'm not kidding, I thought so.

OK, it was childish, if boyishness has none of its own peculiarities. We know better now. The sight of mass misery does not raise up mass missionaries, or even concerned citizens. People don't leap to action from their film and tape lessons. Even if it is a hand-held lesson.

My impression of the people who worked in the early verité days was that they had been seduced by film-the-power-and-the-technology, and not film-the-art-form. We were part of a very special documentation crew of the super-special sixties when great events, protests, love-ins, be-ins, rock and roll, dope, acid and Woodstock happened. And it all did happen and it all did die. All? Well, I have found that staying in touch with those sixties attitudes is almost impossible and probably a waste of time. It cannot be done with your favorite drug, and it cannot be done by ignoring the reactionary seventies.

Is it any wonder that the New York Times finally had to run an article on the depression that is the most obvious quality of what is left of the Love Generation? We, and I don't mean the folks in motion pictures, saw the need for change and took a desperate plunge to get it. So now it is perfectly logical that we are on couches and crutches. We may have been misguided; we may have misjudged the character of the country, but we aren't finished yet, not all of us. Many people from that passionate time are still looking for a way to do some of the same things that we wanted to do then. I am. Government and business cynics who slithered through the sixties with nary a scratch are only now beginning to admit that something might be wrong with the country, now that something is wrong with the economy. They are frightened and are bad partners for change. They will build the Tower of Babel or anything else for jobs and political security. Their example of pragmatism is really short-sighted self-interest.

I've tried it. I have said to myself more than once that it is time that I thought about money, and that I should really try to make some because then I could do what I really want to do. Yes? No. Or unlikely. It didn't work for me because it required me to detach from thinking about the effects of what I was doing. I have been told that it is necessary to be a professional, and in that capacity, that definition, it is not "your problem" what the production is about. It is not the same degree of responsibility that an artist or an active citizen has. The professional assumes that the job is there to do, must be done, and if it is done well then it has been done right. That assumption goes deeper than the job, of course, straight to the heart of the country. If you can assume that there is a film or videomaking tradition that can simply be plugged into, then Godspeed. I cannot. I have lost my first, blind, romantic love for anything that is film. I have instead a wholesale skepticism about a media approach to progress. Our history is too short, our technology too volatile. If we are to do our work well, then it must be coupled to a vision that is beyond a professional execution, beyond a political four years, beyond a middle-class lifestyle, and beyond being victims of our own technological country.

There was a simpler structure, one that survives in remote places on our globe: tribal. It was and is the last culture simple enough to understand and therefore it has the appearance of health. It was a survival culture. If you were a hunter you hunted and the daily need for food assured that you were a valuable



member of the tribe. The same was true for the herdsman or the witch doctor. We, no less than any tribe, are having to face raw survival questions. I know well the industrial function of film, the definition of film and video as a tool of the corporations. Our work cannot have the same, superficial logic. But neither is the "art for art's sake" argument enough. It demands a second part: what does it do? We must make it clear that our work is not a luxury that is affordable only when there is extra cash. We must make clear to ourselves and to our much more complex "tribe" our function as motion picture makers and artists.

In my own approach to my work I have been careless of the definitions and the problems of art-oriented cinema and video. I am changing my mind. Don't get me wrong. I have already protested a hundred times that I have a commoner's heart, and I know in my heart of midwestern heart that art, or ART, in its present cultural setting is shamelessly elitist. What did it have to do with me?

I was afraid to come to New York, but more afraid not to. I didn't like to admit it, but it worried me not to know how smart they were in the Naked City. Pennsylvania never felt like home. I had not found a teacher, never met an artist, and never seen a life I admired. But I wasn't coming to New York to get something over on the folks at home. I did not especially want to get "way out." I was always more interested to see if everyone could take a step together than to see if I could take ten myself. I always knew that I could march by myself. The challenge was to see if we could march. I was sure that they knew how to march in New York City. Otherwise how could they survive?

Surprise! Not only is New York not into group trips, it is unbearably elitist in almost everything: food, clothing, music, dance, etc., etc., etc. And in the hip technological and communicative sense, cinema verité was the elite of the elite. It had the charisma of discovery and the power of mass communication. We knew what we were doing with our snazzy new Eclairs and Nagras. Yes, there was even a self-righteous edge, and we used it. We loved and we helped people, but we also intimidated people, tricked them, and used them more often than they used us. But we were in touch with magic. We, and when I say we I mean all those people who know who I mean, were the witch doctors, the medicine men

"... That young kid in the booth had agreed to make the American freeway nightmare his own ... He was in a mad, desperate attempt to help the nearly helpless through his toll booth, down the highway, out of their cars and into their homes ..."

(including some women), the media conjurers of the sixties. We had a heady brew in hand, and we just knew that the energy was too good to be fragile. None of us understood that Woodstock was created by coincidence and not craft.

Enough romantic incantations have been sung to the Woodstock experience to make me hesitate to do the same. But it was probably the most magical event in our collective lives. Six years later we begin to understand that things can get lost, that our most powerful tribal experiences are not our own to repeat. Our government, both local and national, worked to destroy our magic. Even so the losses were mostly caused by our own ignorance. In any self-respecting tribe the one thing that is demanded of the witch doctor is that he or she be able to repeat the magic. Luck or coincidence is not good enough. Woodstock is a lesson that we should all take to heart rather than to our albums. If we have an independent vision then it must be something that we understand well enough to be able to conceive, create or produce, and repeat. We must be able to conjure our magic and then conjure it up again. Black Southern churches know that Sunday will be another great spiritual meeting. The congregation goes to that special place needing it, expecting it, and demanding it with full knowledge of the way it is done.

That kind of craft puts magic into the art of life. Our art must function like a vital organ. Our silly economic approach to art causes it to be cut out of our lives and our communities. Most of our "authenticated" art is dealt back and forth between collectors, speculators, dealers, galleries, museums, corporations, thieves, and then back around again at higher prices. It is silly that any of our art should inhabit museums, burglar-proof estates, corporation corridors and the climate-controlled basements of all three. It is anti-life to the extent that it is really art: the legacy of people who know and translate the spirit and genius of life. The whole syndrome is exactly like dealing in Wampum: it is the wretched thievery of the public soul. So it had nothing to do with me.

So I thought. I had managed to avoid the silliness of connecting money and art (we did know about the potentially perverse and oppressive relationship between the church and the state, didn't we?) by simply working in the people's medium, film and video. If it was art, that was all right as long as it didn't interfere with what I was doing. And to some degree it has been true. Despite serious thrusts by some members of the avant garde, with few exceptions the galleries have refused to deal in films and tapes. The economics have not been there. We are probably all the luckier for it.

What I suggest is necessary is that motion picture artists join hands with other artists to examine, discuss, and then to destroy our current way of "seeing" and dealing in art. We need to connect historically to the function of art for our own understanding, and then move toward a way of working that will exclude the vicious and destructive dealers, agents and power brokers that stand between us and our communities and audiences. History will support us.

It would be handy if we could first agree on a definition of art. I am interested in an intellectually satisfying definition but I am more interested in finding a way to simplify the words and the concepts and thereby return the art experience to the people. Most people consider themselves to be totally excluded from their own art experience. The few that visit museums go with more of an attitude that reminds one of respect for the dead rather than an understanding of life. If these people are to be included in an understanding of art, then it must be

continued on page 26

A Conversation with Barbara Haspiel

Interview by Tom McDonough

On February 2nd, I talked for about an hour with Barbara Haspiel of the New York State Council on the Arts. Barbara's job is "program associate," which, in the State Council, means something like program or department head. The Department in this case is film. Barbara has as much to do as anyone in New York with funding the activities of independent filmmakers.

We talked about a lot of things to try to get a picture of what the State Council is up to. It was by no means a definitive conversation, but Barbara did develop some ideas of how independent filmmakers can funnel their ambitions through a potentially helpful bureaucracy. We started by trying to define what the State Council does.

* * *

BH: The Council is mandated by law to do several things. One is that we are required to grant funds only to non-profit organizations in New York State. That's a very big item, the words "non-profit organization." We're mandated to fund organizations as opposed to individuals. So occasionally what will happen is that individuals will organize into a non-profit organization, like the AIVF.

We're also mandated to distribute our money geographically. We have a requirement to spend 55 cents per person per county. But there's just not a whole lot going on in the arts in, say, Wyoming County. Still, legislatively, the money must be spent there. Which means that people in New York City, where most of the filmmakers are, along with those cultural organizations requiring large chunks of money, can get stung. One thing the Film Department doesn't believe in is cultural carpetbagging, but maybe we're going to have to start doing something like that, and maybe that's a way we can get around to helping individuals, particularly in film. If you wanted to send the New York City Ballet to Wyoming County, for example, that's an incredible amount of money. But if you wanted to send a filmmaker and his or her film there and screen it in the local library or movie theater, the filmmaker and the community would get a great deal out of it. We'd be able to fulfill our mandate of *per capita* spending.

What we're working toward in this case is a kind of distribution-exhibition system. This is an idea that's still mostly an idea. We've thought about forming a forty-city circuit in New York State. We figured that the state has about forty cities of the size that could handle independent cinema programs. It could go larger, but it would probably start smaller—ten cities, maybe. Filmmakers could make money on rentals and appearances; they might even go for a week's stint. If filmmakers could make \$50 or \$100 or \$200 a day, plus travel and per diem, that might be a way to support their work, get some feedback and build an audience.

I have this idea—it may be an old, absurd idea—but I think movies should be seen in movie theaters. Our idea would be to take an off-night in a local theater—not a weekend night—and program films made by independents in New York State, package a program of films interrelated with each other, and bicycle them around the state. The filmmakers could come in, talk about their films, get some reactions. It's great feedback for the filmmaker and it's great for the community to be able to demystify independent cinema. But maybe we should define what an independent filmmaker is.

(We got into a long rap here in which a number of definitions drifted by. I had the strange sensation of not being able to remember my own name.)

BH: I find it sometimes a problem to define for people at the Council what an independent filmmaker is, because it gets to be very general, very broad. Let's

define an independent filmmaker as someone who makes movies.

TMcD: That narrows it down nicely.

BH: Another question is this: so you're an independent filmmaker, and you've gotten your CAPS, your NEA, your AFI, or whatever—now what? This is a new community of people we're going to have to address ourselves to soon. We have to think about these people who have gotten grants, as well as the people who have not gotten grants. I think the distribution-exhibition circuit is a way to do that.

TMcD: What about television?

BH: Public television? There's not enough money there. There's exposure, but no money. I'm thinking about how you're going to get some money back into your pocket. Perhaps one of the things we ought to do is to encourage public television—since public television is easier to encourage than commercial television—to show more independent films. But right now, public television is struggling to keep stations on the air. So which way do we go? Are there any suggestions? We'd like to know. Knowing our restrictions—that we cannot fund individuals, that we have to work with non-profit organizations, that we must concern ourselves with fiscal liability, geographic distribution, all those things...

TMcD: Well, what kind of suggestions do you hear?

BH: In a lot of ways, we're at the hub here; we hear the complaints, rather than all the answers. We sure know what the problems are. We develop solutions, not a lot of them, but some solutions over a period of years. With MERC, for example, we started with some Super-8 equipment five years ago, and now we're into about \$130,000 worth of all kinds of equipment: Super-8, 16mm, video, post-production. And in response to the people who work with the equipment and have need for it.

Another thing we've tried to do is help library systems expand and develop their collections of independent films. What libraries have to deal with is catalogues that say, "Lovely film, 10 minutes, color, \$150." What we do is send out consultants, librarians like Bill Sloan of the Donnell Library, who have an understanding of what's going on with independent films. That's a shorthand way of getting money back into the pockets of individuals.

TMcD: What's the best way for film and video people to get information about grants? Is there some kind of clearinghouse?

BH: There really isn't. We've prepared some foundation directory lists—what kind of foundations will give grants for what kinds of things—and that's available in our public relations office. The more things we hear about, the more we try to spread the information around. I must say that the film and video community is an open community; people like to share their information. It used to be that people were cloistered. Everyone was inventing the wheel all over again, but that's changing. Places like the AIVF should be funded, by us or whomever, to have somebody on staff to do some of the research and know what's going on. The Council doesn't have enough staff; that's why we cheered when the AIVF happened.

When the AIVF started, I was very excited, because I thought, at last, we have our own organization, a grass roots, self-help group. For example, when the NEA Bicentennial film grants came along, there was no central place to go and get a mailing list, so we got the AIVF's list to fill out the CAPS list. We had a way to let people know about these grants. We're still not reaching everybody, but this is the kind of thing the AIVF really helps us with—it's a forum.

TMcD: You've read a lot of proposals. What makes a good one?

BH: The basic thing is to tell what you want to do,

why it should be a movie—rather than a book, say, and why you're the person to do it, what you've done in the past, and what you hope to do with it in the future. Distribution is sometimes a worry, but not so much with these NEA Bicentennial grants, because the Endowment has said that they're going to try to help with distribution. When they get maybe 40 films made, they may want to do some kind of series on public television.

Another thing about the Bicentennial grants—they're matching grants, which means that the Council has to come up with the amount offered by the Endowment. We also do a lot of matchmaking in other areas. Someone may call and say they need an editor; we may know that so-and-so is looking for work. There's also some county money around; old Bethpage may want an historical film made. Something like the AIVF's membership and skills list is a good source for this kind of thing.

We're a state agency. It's all tax money. Everybody should have an equal opportunity, at least to know about the grants, to be in competition with everybody else. What it comes down to is serving the greatest number of people with the least amount of money. We don't have a Nielsen rating system to contend with, but we have to take service into consideration. We have to be terribly realistic about a state budget that has to be balanced. The New York State Council on the Arts is sort of born again every year. Every year, just as an organization has to apply to the Council for money, we have to apply to the Legislature.

TMcD: There was a time in the 60's when film school graduates could look to independent personal filmmaking as a viable vocation. The AFI had just started; there was access to public television via things like PBL. What about the future?

BH: I think it depends on building audiences. Art Workers' Newsletter said recently that independent filmmakers earn an average of \$600 a year from their films. Some make nothing, some lose money, the range varies widely, but \$600 is spoken of as an average. So I guess if you look at it that way, it's not a viable vocation. But if we can get the audience interested—and this is not going to happen instantly—if we can get the audience interested in looking at something other than *Jaws*, or even something in addition to *Jaws*... I think that's one of the things the Council should do, is to help create that demand, whether it's through our forty-city circuit, or a two-city circuit, or getting more films on television. That would be a good beginning. □

the film business

it's a business
he said

it's only a job
he said

it's my life

my organs hanging out of my mind
dripping blood on celluloid
my back arched
paralyzed in defiance

i've only just been born

by karen back

Not a Pretty Picture:

A Transition from Documentary to Low-Budget Fiction

by Martha Coolidge

Like many of us independent filmmakers, I have always wanted to make fiction films. The major deterrent was that the budget of a fiction film is prohibitively higher than that for a documentary. Distribution also posed a problem, as a non-feature-length fiction film must have a very specific purpose; i.e., a direct teaching film or an entertaining theatrical short. But in the last couple of years, I became frustrated with the limitations of the documentary portraits I was making because I wanted to look deeper into people's lives without invading their privacy. I then got an idea for a small, part fiction, semi-autobiographical film based on my own rape. I would have no privacy problem with myself, and the film would be fictionalized, using actors in an improvisational rehearsal setting as well as in straight fiction.

What began as a small film grew to feature length, and I learned a lot about working under a very special condition: low-budget fiction. This is the single element which makes this a genre different from any other. The LOW-BUDGET has very specific problems connected with it, particularly when it is a period film. This one was set in 1962.

To start with, a low-budget fiction film is often the director's and everyone else's first attempt. The problem, however, is that you don't have the experience which might make up for the lack of money in terms of fewer mistakes. In the case of *Not a Pretty Picture* (with eternal indebtedness to the people I met through AIVF), all the major positions on the crew were filled by professionals. In the positions particular to fiction films, such as props, make-up, sets, script and P.A.s, we had more enthusiasm than professional experience. We were lucky in that the props and costumes of the period (which was no high point of fashion) could be found in our trunks, basements and in thrift shops.

Casting

I hadn't made a fiction film since graduate school, and the bulk of my theatre acting and directing experience had been in college. I was nervous and I wasn't quite sure where to start looking for actors. I had a very specific improvisational process in mind and the actors had to be young and non-union. Instead of putting a notice in the paper, which I have found in the past to be often more frustrating than fruitful, I called friends of mine with theatre and acting connections and described to them who I needed. In this way the actors who I saw fit my requirements and came highly recommended. I simply had to find the people I wanted.

Casting is a talent in itself, and certainly a major decision point for any motion picture. In this case I

could not afford actors who had had a lot of film experience. I decided to look for the element which was the most risky in the film: the rehearsal improvisation and the use of the actors as people. As a documentary portraitmaker, this was an area I felt very sure of. I knew that the actors had to have certain qualities as themselves to work in the rehearsal scene. The most important roles were the woman who would play me and the rapist. I wanted a woman who had had a similar experience and who would have certain qualities in common with me. The actor had to be a nice guy himself and be able to play a jock rapist. Both of these actors would have to externalize the process in which they rehearsed, as that would be the essence of the rape scene.

Instead of having the actors read, I simply had long talks with them. The first quality I looked for was something filmic about them, which is the same in documentary or fiction. I also needed an "excitement" from them about the film's idea which would show in the rehearsal and, for them, might make up for my lack of finances. They also had to be candid about their own lives on camera, which is especially difficult for actors who are by necessity conscious of their image.

I felt very lucky to find Michele Manenti and Jim Carrington. They had known and worked with each other before, which would help us in the rehearsal scene. It would be particularly helpful for Michele who had been raped under similar circumstances. I felt there was a great deal which could be released in Jim. This became more apparent in rehearsals. All the casting was dependent on how the rehearsals went, as I hadn't had anyone read—no one was replaced.

Probably the most controversial move I made in casting was putting my own roommate from school, Anne, in the film to play herself. This move was based on her impact as a documentary element of the film as well as her character. I felt that the additional layer of reality this added would reinforce the others in the film. Also, her extraordinary personality and humor had saved me that year, and to find an actress who could play that would have been impossible. And her personal feelings about that year became an important element of the film, for she totally expressed the pain resulting from non-communication in adolescence.

I needed one SAG actor, an older man. I found SAG very cooperative, as the AFI (who gave me a grant for the film) has an understanding with them. The actor worked under the 150% deferral deal. What did become clear to me is the necessity for even

more cooperation between low-budget filmmakers and SAG, as many kinds of low-budget production are still almost impossible.

Script

To further make the film a combination of reality and fiction, the script was built out of the experiences of every member of the cast. All of us reminisced and improvised until the script was completely constructed. This expanded the script beyond simply my own experience. The greatest limitation on the script, aside from not being able to afford an established scriptwriter, was insufficient rehearsal time because I couldn't pay the actors. They were all holding down other jobs and we had a terrible time getting together. For non-film-experienced actors and directors, rehearsal time is essential, and I'll never skimp on that again.

Production

The film never would have been launched if it weren't for Jan Saunders. An experienced production manager is absolutely central to a fiction production, and doubly so on a low-budget production. Everything must be planned. Because we were trying to save money, we found certain things took more time, and all of this had to be taken into consideration. The competency and commitment of the camera persons, Don Lenzner and Fred Murphy; soundperson, Maryte Kavaliauskas; and gaffer, Nancy Schreiber, were also major factors in the success of production.

One financial note—we used 7247. To compensate for the high contrast, we chem-toned the entire film, which costs more. In addition, I would guess that we spent a good extra hour to three hours lighting every major set than we would have spent in lighting 7254. This kind of production time turns into real expense.

Shooting

One of the biggest problems and limitations of a low budget is not being able to have a set or moving cameras on dollies. The whole way of shooting the film is more limited. The scenes are broken down into shorter takes and often into closer shots. Now, even actors experienced in film would find this difficult, but they would have an easier time compensating for the resulting disruption of their performances. With inexperienced film actors, it only further inhibits and breaks up their concentration. This is the double burden on the actors and director in a low-budget film. The director bears the responsibility of seeing the consistency of the performances and maintaining the pace and flow. Also, an audience is used to seeing films with longer, fluid takes and more medium and long shots. Therefore, they experience a film shot under these conditions as uneven and more claustrophobic, and any jolt in a performance stands out even more.

Because the production of *Not a Pretty Picture* was so well organized, I was really directing for the first time. I had time to work with the actors on set and had time to deal with all of the last-minute details and specific acting problems that came up. The latter were usually a result of the actors' diverse working patterns or personality conflicts.

Low-budget films are usually shot on location and shooting at exterior locations is a real hassle; at different times we found ourselves surrounded by hundreds of people we weren't prepared to handle, in the middle of a knife fight, and on a major bus route. Shooting was halted by the arrival of a number of fire engines, and at another time, by a Mr. Softee truck that wouldn't go away.

At first the waiting was very hard for all the actors. I had tried to prepare them for it. I also let them know the framing of the shots and why they had to move in certain ways. My feeling is that they are professionals and they need to know all the tools of the trade that they are working in. The cast and crew on this film were unusually close and very cooperative and respectful of each other. That made the production of

continued on page 28



Making Friends with Super-8

by Mark Mikolas

Mark Mikolas is co-owner of Super-8 Film Group, a production company, and co-author, with Gunther Hoos, of a handbook on all phases of Super-8.

In March of 1974, four of us left for Memphis, Tennessee, to film a tradition of life and drum music still being carried on by several rural Blacks in the Memphis area, all over 65 years old. There was a feeling that this disappearing form of music should be recorded whether the venture would pay for itself or not. We packed three cameras, a stereo recorder, a sync recorder, a lighting kit, a fluid-head tripod, a shoulder pod, repair kit, eight hours of film stock, 30 hours of recording tape and all accessories—in the boot of a Toyota!

We travelled around western Tennessee and the fields of Arkansas for over two weeks, filming. When we returned, we had all of our film processed and workprinted and began editing. A month later we had completed our first film, *Tell The Angels*, documenting some real "down home" Blues played by Cleo Williamson and her friends and relatives.

The total costs—including all expenses for the trip, all stock, tape, processing and workprint (eight hours' worth), resolving, editing, conforming and answer print—came to under \$3,000!

How? In super 8.

Super 8? Home movies? Well, not exactly. Quietly and steadily, this modest little medium has developed to the point where there is nothing that can be done in film that can't be done with "spaghetti." What's more important, you can own every necessary piece of equipment for complete double-system production for as little as \$2,500. From then on, you are truly an independent filmmaker. You can make any film you want for nothing but the cost of stock and labs. And in super 8, this is one-half to one-third the price it would be in 16mm.

The basic super 8 sync system revolves around one recorder which uses super 8 magnetic fullcoat. It syncs to a digital pulse, making virtually every off-the-shelf super 8 camera a sync camera with no modification. It can sync to a pulse from a super 8 projector, giving you interlock capability. It can sync to pilotone or AC line and can be used with a 16mm camera with a pilotone generator or in sync with any 16mm dubbing equipment of video chains. It has a built-in crystal control. Many super 8 cameras can be crystal controlled for \$200, giving you a crystal system. The recorder also puts out a 60Hz signal for transfer to 1/4" tape. With a four-track recorder, several small equalizers and a mixing board, you can do your own multiple sync-track mixing. After making the master track, the recorder can be synched to the projector and the track transferred to the magnetic stripe on original or prints. The Super8 Sound Recorder, of which we are speaking, costs \$645 and requires no modification or accessories to do all of the above.

Want to get fancy? The Uher 134 can be purchased with a crystal sync generator for stereo sync recording. With a little customizing, the sync track can be left in tack and end up with channel two recorded on the balance stripe of super 8 film and it can be played back on a stereo super 8 projector. The magnetic stripe, by the way, has a frequency response of 40 - 12,000Hz, travels at 4 ips and can surpass the quality of 16mm optical tracks.

A single-system camera with an unexaggerated frequency response of 50 - 12,000Hz with a S7dB S/N ratio can be had for under \$2,000. Or how about a camera with a 6-66mm Schneider zoom, powered at a continuously variable rate from two to twelve seconds over its full focal length range, running at

continuously variable rates from 2 - 70 fps with macro-focusing capability down to its front element, in-camera dissolve capability, fade control, automatic or manual exposure, interchangeable lenses, double-system or crystal control capability and which weighs about the same and costs about one-half of an Eclair 200' magazine?

Lenses? How about a 2.5mm? Or a 6 - 80mm zoom (equivalent to about a 12 - 160mm lens in 16mm). Or attach your 400mm Nikon lens, which on a super 8 camera is about the same effective focal length as a 2000mm lens on your still camera. For \$5,500 you can purchase a ten-plate horizontal table with two picture heads that does everything a Steenbeck does... and more. (Or if you have a Kem, buy super 8 modules to convert it for super 8 use.)

But equipment is just tools. What about making films?

The designation "super 8" refers to the film width, 8mm, and the sprocket hole size and position. Beyond that, we are talking about a highly diverse field of film endeavors. In fact, in our attempt to characterize that world, we have had to define it by its diversity. Super 8 has brought the capability to shoot film to almost everyone. By doing so, everyone has gone off to make films for whatever reason, motivation, yearning or craziness that drives them. Neither Kodak, the professionals, the magazines, the equipment industry, the funding syndrome, the universities nor the film clubs have much influence over the uses for super 8 filmmaking which people are discovering for themselves. Even traditional 16mm and 35mm filmmakers find in low-cost super 8 a medium which allows them free reign to use film in applications that never made financial sense before.

A kid in New Jersey built a rocket around his super 8 camera and obtained footage of the shot up and the parachute down. This footage found its way into network broadcast many times as the opening shot of a filler. Maria Schneider, apart from acting in Bertolucci's *1900*, bought a super 8 camera and made her own film about Bertolucci. From the rapids of Bhutan to the schools of Red China, from amateur horror features (shot in super 8 "CinemaScope" 2.66:1) to some of the most avant of avant-garde in filmmaking—no longer does one need to wait (perhaps forever) for that \$100,000 grant.

Imagine being able to shoot anything you want for as little as \$1.60/min. You can shoot about 50 hours of film for the price of one year's tuition in film school. Which sounds like the better way to learn cinematography? And speaking of film schools, if that's your route, do you need 16mm to learn camera-work? sound recording? production planning? direction? editing? mixing? budgeting? In short, filmmaking? As long as schools are tied to 16mm (and one camera and recorder for each six students), the equipment sign-out list is the biggest obstacle to learning filmmaking. The university could equip everyone with super 8 sync gear for the full term on the same budget. And there would always be editing table space available. Every technique of standard film production could be taught and practiced. And, perhaps what's most important, graduates could go on making films after graduation, rather than weighing the merits of an Arri versus Eclair while pounding the streets and writing proposals and waiting for unemployment checks. In fact, universities can teach super 8 filmmaking to students in all disciplines whose needs for data gathering, recording and documentation in later

careers will necessitate an increasingly greater sophistication in media technology.

Super 8 can be contact printed, mass release printed through an internegative, blown up to 16mm, transferred to all video formats, broadcast, front-projected or rear-projected and screened larger than most independent theaters can handle (using one of several models of arc and xenon projectors). What will the quality be?

Basically, what you make it.

Optical printing is possible, even full immersion liquid gate, but the super 8 filmmaker cannot rely on it without eating up most of his savings in the costs. Color correction? None. Fast original stocks without grain? No. Shooting super 8 at its ultimate quality is a unique challenge to the ambitious filmmaker. In no other medium does the end product depend so much on the original lighting and camerawork. Most sophisticated effects are best devised and executed in-camera. The super 8 filmmaker is a *filmmaker*. Everything but processing and printing is in his or her hands.

One rough guideline we have found: small budgets—small equipment—intimate films—small audiences: the true medium of personal filmmaking. Sell it to the networks? Deliver an enhanced, electronically color-corrected 2" Quad tape and they'll never question its filmic origin, even if that original was pushed EF.

Color video is portable and so is 16mm. But camerapersons rapidly realize the difference between being able to *take* it with you and, with super 8, to *have* it with you.

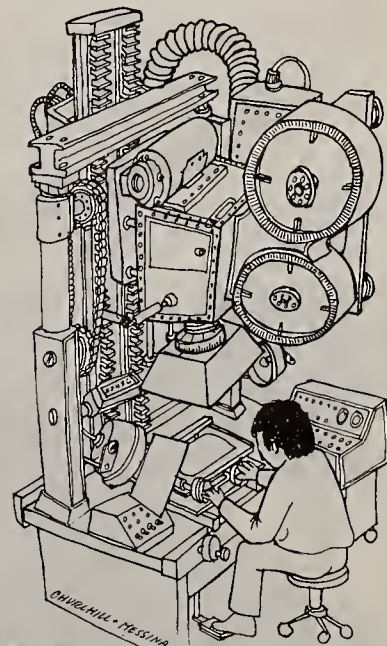
Commercial possibilities? Everyone in the world who has use for film but has not been able to afford it. The investment: a little money and lots of time.

Got a feature in mind? Shoot the pilot in super 8.

Trying to document a process with a still camera and a tape recorder? Turn them in for a super 8 single-system camera (with money to spare to start filming).

Got a client who can't afford a film this year? Sell him super 8 and make more of a profit on the job than you did in 16mm.

The film you always dreamed of making: what's stopping you?



988...click
 989...East on one...click
 990...East on one, West on two...click
 991...East on one, West on two, up on one...click
 992...East on one, West on two, up on one, BG-A...
 click
 993...East on one, I'm an artist...I'm an artist...
 BG-A...click
 994...East on one, West on two, up on one, BG-A,
 BG-B...click

WOMAN ALIVE!

An Interview with Joan Shigekawa

Interviewed by Ted Churchill

Transcription and editing by Tom McDonough



C: Tell me about the genesis of *Woman Alive!* and how you were involved in it.

S: I was freelancing as an independent producer. I guess it was the summer of 1973, and what happened was, I got a call on my answering service—call Ronnie Eldridge at *MS. Magazine*. So I called her back, and it turned out they were interviewing producers and someone had given her my name. Would I come and talk with them; they were going to do an hour version of *Ms. Magazine* for national public television.

I went to talk with them; they asked to see my work. I screened my sample reel for the people at *Ms.* and their collaborators, KERA, the Dallas public television station.

At the same time, a whole lot of other people were going in and talking to them. We would run into each other lugging our films past the switchboard. We would try to share information with each other, because for a long time we didn't hear anything. Eventually, after a month and a half, they offered me the job, which was fantastic, because it was exactly the kind of thing I wanted to do at that time.

C: What was it about your background that got you the job?

S: I've been trying to figure that out since I started the show. You always wonder when you're just another name in the hopper. I still don't really know.

I'd been working since 1960 in film and television. My first New York job was as a secretary at CBS. There I was, right out of Bryn Mawr College and I was thrilled. I was really sort of dim about it. The Women's Movement hadn't really started. The other day a woman asked me, "Did you always want to be a producer?" I had to tell her that when I started working, it never occurred to me that I could be a producer, because I would look around CBS and I didn't see any women producers. There were women who were forty year old production assistants, and that was the kind of job I wanted to have. It didn't occur to me that all the young men who were already production assistants were planning their careers as producers and directors, following all the men executive producers into the men's room and all that stuff. The way I managed to work my way through it and out of it was by switching jobs. I left the job at CBS and went over to NBC as a secretary on the Today Show. Then I worked as field director of admissions at Barnard, and after that I went back to CBS News as a researcher. By not staying in one place, I was able to get varied experience and move up.

Then two friends of mine got a chance to do ten half-hour films about the circus for \$75,000—ten films for \$7500 apiece, and they wanted me to go in with them. That was 1963. I knew there was going to be a lot of work, and that the money obviously was going to be minimal. I asked them for an associate producer's credit, because that was the job I'd be doing. They were taken aback, but I got my first associate producer's credit.

I went on to do my first producing job at WNET, doing an hour weekly cultural magazine, videotape in the studio. And then I went to PBL, worked on dramas and theater. I did a lot of different things and learned a lot of different jobs.

One of the things that women can do that's harder for men is to slip back and forth between categories. If a woman has been a producer for, say, ten years, and there's an opening for an associate producer, she can go get that job if she's out of work. Whereas a man can't because he'd be embarrassed and would be an embarrassment to other men. A couple of years ago, while I was raising money for *Woman Alive!* I got a call from a network about an associate producer's job. They'd hired a producer—a man who'd been a network sales executive but wasn't that strong in production. They knew they'd need a strong associate producer. So they were interviewing women who were already producers. That's all job kind of stuff, and that's television.

C: How was *Woman Alive!* a different production experience? Was there something special about getting the series done?

S: For the pilot, Susan Lester was the writer/associate producer and Sarah Stein was the editor. We had all had experience working in television bureaucracies and working as independents. But what was special was the chance to work with an all-woman film crew on a feminist project designed for television. And working with the women at *Ms. Magazine* was special—to have that feeling of excitement and real support. For the series, we tried to experiment with some of the usual ways of doing things. Take, for example, the line production jobs. We already had 200 resumes on file. We answered all of them. Usually, sending in a resume is like throwing it against a stone wall; nobody ever calls you back, nobody ever tells you if it's any good. You just have to stare at the phone and work up your nerve to make the follow-up call. Another thing we decided to do was to not give away staff jobs before we had interviewed people. More than a hundred people at WNET applied for a job. Once you're committed to interviewing, you have to stay with it and give everyone an equal chance. We didn't interview anyone from the outside; we felt that women within WNET were starved for promotion and should have the first crack. The double whammy—and I was very naive about this—is that if you talk to 100 people about four jobs, 96 people are going to be disappointed.

And the same was true of the filmmakers. There were more than a hundred women filmmakers who

called from the New York area alone. One of our priorities was that as many women as possible should benefit from this very small amount of money. We really made a commitment to the women in the independent film community and we saw about seventy-five people. During pre-production, we were screening sample films till eleven o'clock night after night. Throwing the doors open that way to a community which is not really a television community—when what you're doing is a television program—led to a lot of confusion. Some people thought it was like a grant thing: money to make a film. But actually it was a television series that had a point of view, and within that point of view, certain things were "givens". If you didn't agree with that point of view, you really should do film for a different series. One of the givens is that women are changing; another one of the givens is that people don't understand that change, and finally, that the media stereotype of what the Women's Movement is all about is very narrow and biased.

C: Can you elaborate on that?

S: One of the things about seeing women on television—when you see them at all—is that you're seeing a bad stereotype. Forty percent of American women work. If you look at television commercials, you'd think American women spend seventy-five percent of their time in the bathroom, and only about seven percent of them work. In a study by the United Methodist Church, you find that women are only about thirty percent of the images in dramatic series in prime time, that they are incapable of making decisions on their own, and they're just part of a support system. Very rarely do they actually supervise other people. In commercial television, nearly all the women are young. Men can be any age. With a few exceptions, like Maude, the women are young. There's a whole thing about selling products and structuring shows around young women who are considered to be more attractive and also have more buying power. Men in these prime time dramas are concerned with big issues, with their careers. Women are concerned with domestic issues, romance, getting a man and keeping him. That stereotype prevails in all media.

The same is true in news. There was a study done by the American Association of University Women in '74; the statistics are staggering. They monitored a month of network news. In straight news stories, in over 5,000 stories, only 500 or so were about women. Of the number of reporters—there were about 2,400—there were 253 women. Of the women that were featured, they often were politicians' wives or victims of disasters. The television image of what women are about is extremely skewed. Commercials are the easiest target, but the thing that's really distressing is that the same distortion holds true in news and public affairs.

What we wanted to do in *Woman Alive!* was to break through that stereotype and show real women and what their lives were all about. All the films in the series had that point of view—real women in the process of change, or in the process of looking into their lives. We tried to go and talk to women that nobody in television ever talked to.

We felt in the course of producing *Woman Alive!* an enormous pressure to come in on budget, because

Joan Shigekawa is a member of the AIVF and has worked for fifteen years in film, television, and theatrical productions. She is currently the producer of *WOMAN ALIVE!*, a National Public Television series produced at WNET in collaboration with *Ms. Magazine*.

there's still this stereotype that women can't handle money, that women will squander money on foolish things, go to Saks and blow the budget on a new hat. It doesn't matter how many times women come in on budget—and we did come in on time and on budget—there's still that stereotype. You're doubly, triply scrutinized from all sides. The same was true for blacks for a long time, still is true to some extent. If a black show went over budget, they'd say, "Look at that, they really are irresponsible." If a man goes over budget, however, you don't hear anyone saying that men don't know how to handle money.

Some filmmakers came to us with ideas that were very promising, but they were \$20,000 ideas, or \$30,000 ideas, and we had to say no, because we had only \$16,000 for each twenty minute segment.

One thing to remember is that this series started out as twelve one-hour specials at a budget in excess of two million dollars, an adequately funded program that would have three or four film segments—little ones, big ones—twelve times four is forty-eight films. We ended up making ten films. Instead of twelve hours of magazine programming, we ended up with five—ten half hours, and on a production budget that was less than \$400,000.

C: How long did it take you to find funding for the series? Why did you have problems?

S: In looking back on the production of *Woman Alive!* I realize that of the three years spent in making the pilot and trying to fund the series, only ten months were actually spent in making films and tapes. The rest was either spent trying to get money, writing proposals or freelancing on other jobs. Increasingly, public television is becoming dependent on ratings and outside money—on business. And I don't think that's a very cheerful omen for the future of those of us who want to do documentaries or experimental programming.

We began by thinking that any company interested in the way women were changing would be interested in underwriting this program. We were wrong.

As time went on, and we went trucking around from corporation to corporation with our proposal, we kept hearing, we'll pass on this. When they say to you "Good luck," you know it's all over. Most of the people who are corporate vice-presidents in charge of public relations, they don't really want to rock the boat. They're in business to make the company look good.

The first thing we encountered was real suspicion about the Women's Movement. Corporations have a lot of money invested in a certain image of women. Their commercials tell us what they think we are. They don't really want to be confronted with the change that's happening.

We also heard from off the record friends that corporations are shy of funding public affairs programs. The corporations understand that you can't do a documentary about how women are changing without questioning things like the actuarial tables of insurance companies, why women have trouble getting credit, and job discrimination. Those are the things that women are trying to change, and they're also the things that business is about. We were talking about public affairs documentaries, and they would ask us, "Could we see the scripts for the films before they're shot?" We would say, "Well, there is no script. It's a documentary and we go out to explore. We can't give you a script before the film is shot and edited." That was unacceptable.

Also a lot of corporations are not giving equal pay for equal work to women in their companies, and if they pretend that these inequities don't exist, just play possum, maybe the problem will go away, or at least they can stave it off. But if they show by sponsoring our series that they understand that they're vulnerable, then the women in their companies might really come after them.

Those were some of the reasons. Obviously, some of the people legitimately didn't like the first special, but

those are some of the underlying political reasons for not funding the program.

If you look at what is funded, you find that a great deal of it is acquisitions, BBC acquisitions, programs that a corporation can look at in advance and decide whether or not it's safe for them. Or cultural programs—dance, music. But very few public affairs programs are funded by corporations.

So in the end what happened was that a one-hour magazine shrank to a half-hour magazine, and twelve hour programs shrank to ten half-hours. There was always a maybe-promise from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for \$400,000, pending support from other sources. After months of trying for other sources, we trimmed the concept to fit the available funds. After getting rejected and rejected and rejected, we could think of only one way to save the situation, and that was a half-hour magazine.

C: You mentioned before that over 100 women filmmakers applied to *Women Alive!* from the New York area alone. It must have been difficult to decide who got to make films for the series.

S: We had to deal with limitations at every turn. When we were ready to go into production, a lot of people who were used to making TV films came in and said, "Tell me what you want me to do, I'll do it." But we weren't making assignments; we were trying to have a dialogue between two creative parties, to evolve a concept in which both the independent filmmakers and the programmers might have a common ground, a common understanding of what the project would be, and that's intuitive. Some people came in with ideas that they thought we would like rather than ideas that they were excited about making a film about. And you could always tell. You could tell this was something they might be interested in doing, but as a job of work, not as a film they thought ought to be made. There was so much work and so little money that unless you really cared about the film you were making, it would be very hard to pull it off. We had a list of maybe eighty ideas that we wanted to explore, but we weren't assigning ideas. Someone would come in, we'd talk back and forth until we came up with something that we were really excited about.

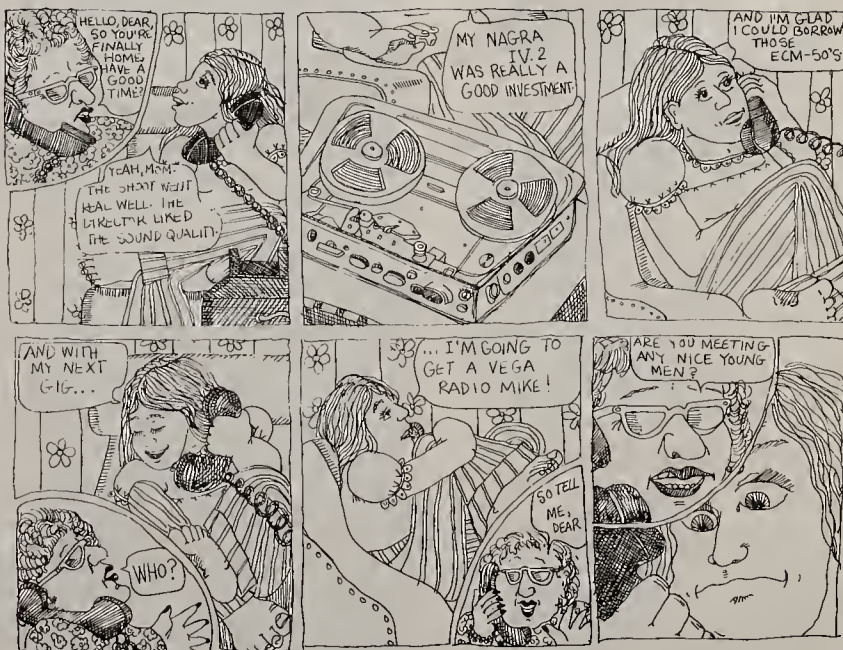
Later on, geography became very important. Women are struggling to change all over the country; we couldn't just go on the air with nine films about New York City women and one from Oklahoma. Also, there's a tendency to replicate yourself, to replicate

your own age group in your choice of subject. At a certain point we realized we didn't have anything to represent teenagers or older women. In the beginning, it was wide open. Later on, the options for filmmakers diminished. We felt we had in these ten programs to cover a fairly wide spectrum.

There's something that, if you're an independent and you're used to working by yourself, is hard to understand, and that is often ten people will come up with the same idea. Ten years ago, for example, no one was thinking about making films about parents, grandparents—roots. Then about two years ago, you look around and a lot of people, through no conscious agreement, decided that it would be interesting to look at these things; it's just something that's in the air.

The same is true for films about women. Until you see maybe sixty proposals in a stack, it's hard to understand what's going on. Many people who were concerned three or four years ago about doing documentary and political films are now concerned about doing fiction films and working with actors, using the dramatic form. That's not anything that anybody dictated; it's just that it's time to try that.

One of the things about having a dialogue with that many people is that there are bound to be a lot of people disappointed, and who don't, who can't understand how the choices were made. The decisions were made partly on an understanding of independent film production and money, and an understanding of the person's prior work. But it was very complicated. Sometimes the idea, though it was marvelous, was not right for the series within the parameters of the proposals, or the idea required more money than we had—or, again, geography. Sometimes an idea isn't really a twenty minute film idea. Sometimes it's not even something you can articulate. I went through this quandary about how to get the word out, because there's this kind of paranoia about who knows what. We try to be a community, but there is this paranoia about jobs and assignments, sharing information or not sharing information. But when a hundred filmmakers can find you, it's no secret. We set up an elaborate system of screening films; more than one person would screen each film; people shared their notes. We also at the same time built an enormous talent file of women technicians from all over the country.



Cathy Kugel/Tom McDonough

FILM AND FILM

For you Film is only a show.
 For me it is almost a way to look at the world.
 Film is a vehicle for movements.
 Film is an innovator in literature.
 Film is a destroyer of aesthetics.
 Film is fearless.
 Film is a sportsman.
 Film is a disperser of ideas.
 But Film is sick. Capitalism has covered its eye with gold.
 Dexterous entrepreneurs lead it down the street by the hand.
 They collect cash by turning over their hearts to pathetic subjects.
 This must come to an end.
 Communism must seize Film from profiteering producers.
 Futurism must steam out the numbing water-slowness and morality.
 Without this we will have either the imported tap dance of America or unbroken 'tearful eyes' of Mosjukhim.
 The first is tiresome.
 The second even worse.

written by VV Mayakovsky
 appeared in *KinoPhot* #4, Oct. 5-12, 1922

introduction and translation by Charles Musser
 from *Teatr i Kino*, Vol 2., p. 425, Moscow, 1954

Kino i Kino (Film and Film) was the poet Mayakovsky's response to a crisis point in Soviet film culture. In 1922, five years after the Revolution, Soviet film culture was still that of pre-revolutionary Russia. Would the Revolution accept the established film industry dominated by Hollywood and German exports, or would it promote a new cinema in touch with the realities of Soviet society? Mayakovsky's political-aesthetic analysis was affirmed over the next two years with the emergence of major filmmakers like Eisenstein, Vertov, Pudovkin, Kuleshov, Ermler, Kozintzev and Trauberg. While the parallels between Soviet society of 1922 and American society of today are few, an analogy with our position in American film culture has definite validity. Can we successfully confront the Hollywood pastiche known as commercial cinema: cops and robbers pictures, violence films, and exploitation movies? Can we make films that are in touch with the social and aesthetic realities of American life? And what are the objective forces that will make this possible?

C: That's terrific. Working in the industry and being involved in the Association as well, I can appreciate the difficulty in making the decisions you had to make. Judging from the shows of *Woman Alive!* I have seen, I think you made the right ones. What's happening with the show this year?

S: I don't know. This season, our production unit is creating four specials. To do a film that takes real thought or shaping can take six months or a year. We are going to have to try to do them in much less time—eight to ten weeks. We'll work this time with a central core staff. Jacqueline Donnet is the coordinating producer, Janis Klein is the associate producer and Ronnie Eldridge is the executive producer. Once again, I'll be the producer. These specials will probably be the last season for *Woman Alive!* The Corporation for Public Broadcasting will support a series for only two seasons and I don't see any corporations coming forward with financial support. All of this experience—trying to raise money, learning about the way the public television system functions and the independent world has been an incredible education. A lot of it has been very hard, professionally and personally. It's been a lot of work, much of it using up creative energy struggling with bureaucratic systems. But sometimes terrific things happen, like when the "What's Happening" series at the Museum of Modern Art and the Donnell chose to build a program around three films from *Woman Alive!*

Many AIVF members made major contributions to the series and I'd like to acknowledge that with special thanks to the filmmakers.

Independent Films made for WOMAN ALIVE

ARMY WIVES CHANGE OF COMMAND

A film by Patricia Sides

BECOMING TOUGH ENOUGH

A film by Mirra Bank

NINE TO FIVE

A film by Suzanne Jasper

BETWEEN TIMES

A film by Abigail Child

THE WOMEN OF McCAYSVILLE INDUSTRIES

A film by Charlotte Zwerin

FOUR MEN FROM OREGON

A film by Vic Losick

MIDDLE AGE...

A film by Ellen Povde

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

A film by Bonda E. Lee

WORK IN PROGRESS

A film by Linda Leeds

FARMING

A film by Nina Schulman



FIRST ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF CINEMA & ART

ON THE GROUNDS OF
 ° LYNDHURST CASTLE-ON-HUDSON
 635 SO B'WAY TARRYTOWN, N.Y.

- ° SAT. JUNE 19
- ° GROUNDS OPEN FOR PICNICING -- 6:00p.m.
- ° VIDEO, FILM, & PERFORMANCE PIECES
START AT DUSK
- ° \$2.50 donation - \$2.00 members

SPONSORED BY
 FILM WORKSHOP OF WESTCHESTER
 A.I.V.F.
 NYSFA, NEA, CAW



An Introduction to Video Systems

Video by its very newness invites constant change and upgrading... a few years ago, a color camera for under \$30,000 was a fantasy. Today they start at \$1900...

by Alan Miller

Video equipment often seems to change faster than the weather. It seems as if every week a new camera or editing deck makes its appearance. The result is an often frustrated individual who wants to stay current, but can't afford the time or energy. Unfortunately, I know of no solution to this problem. Video by its very newness invites constant change and upgrading. Since it is an electronic medium, its growth keeps pace with the latest technological developments in electronics such as integrated circuits, solid-state design, etc. Electronics, in fact, is probably harder to keep up with than video equipment. The reason film does not change at such speed is its basically "mechanical" (rather than electronic) nature and the fact that it has been developing for more than 75 years. In contrast, broadcast videotape has only been around about 15 years, and portable units only about five years. Low-cost portable color is only about two years old. Video is in its infancy and will go through many changes before it matures.

Within all this change and confusion, however, there is a certain amount of stability. Hopefully, this article will pinpoint the main components of the current video systems.

The Portapaks

The first group of equipment is the "portapaks." These started the video revolution with the first units that were truly portable. There are various types made from several different manufacturers such as Sony,

Alan Miller is a video artist who lives and works in New York City. He is a member of the Board of the Association.

Panasonic, JVC, Sanyo, Akai, etc. For the purposes of this article I will limit discussion to either color or color-capable equipment.

Sony has two color portapaks. One is the AV/8400—a ½" reel-to-reel update of the original AV/AVC 3400 Black and White portapak. They also make the AV 3800—a ¾" video cassette portapak. Both decks record and play in color. The 3800 has much more sophisticated electronics and is superior in quality. The 8400 costs about \$1400 without the camera. The 3800 costs about \$3000 without the camera. Color cameras will be discussed later in the article. The 3800 is the deck currently being used by TV stations and networks around the country for ENG (Electronic News Gathering), and is recognized as the best around. True to form, Sony has just announced a whole new series of ¾" decks called "Broadcaster" models with substantial improvements, at significantly higher prices.

Panasonic and JVC also have ½" reel-to-reel portapaks in about the same price range as the Sony AV 8400. This summer JVC will show its new ¾" videocassette portapak to rival the Sony 3800. Akai makes a ¼" reel-to-reel portapak that is very small and lightweight, but has a lesser signal due to the smaller tape size. Even so, WOR-TV News in New York uses Akai exclusively for their ENG. Sanyo makes a ½" cartridge portapak with superior quality, including four video heads for perfect slow-motion, but it is not standardized to EIAJ (Electronics Industry of Japan) standards and thus is incompatible with other manufacturers' units.

Color Cameras

Color cameras are probably the fastest growing area. If decks appear every six months, then cameras seem to appear every week. A few years ago a color camera for under \$30,000 was a fantasy. Today they start at \$1900 and go all the way to \$100,000 plus. This article will explore the less expensive (and more accessible) ones. Generally, the rule that you get what you pay for applies. The picture quality and colorimetry of the more expensive cameras is just superior to that of the cheaper ones. However, several of the mid-range cameras give excellent response within their limits. The Sony DXC 1600 for about \$5000 is very good. It does have one major flaw, a tendency to lag slightly when panned or tilted. Its plus is a built-in image enhancer for sharper pictures. The JVC and Panasonic are slightly cheaper and do not appear quite as sharp. The Akai, Magnavox, GBC and Concord are cheaper still and perform according to form. At the other end of the price spectrum are the \$20,000 to \$30,000 cameras like the Fernseh, Ikegami, Asaka, and RCA. They all perform very well and are the cameras most often used by network and local stations. It must be emphasized that many stations are using the Akai, Sony and JVC.

An article like this wouldn't seem right without the latest news in cameras. One is that JVC will preview a new camera for under \$10,000. Hitachi (Shibaden) has shown a new camera that weighs only 6.6 pounds complete, fits in a small suitcase, has no external CCU (camera control unit) and has what appears to be excellent response. It looked as good as the Sony DXC 1600 at a recent trade show and will cost \$1000 less. The most exciting new development, however, is the Toshiba three-tube Chalnicon, backpackless camera priced at about \$12,000. It weighs about 16 pounds, is shoulder-mounted like a film camera, and can shoot at 20 footcandles. This camera has features that until recently were only found in the \$20-30,000 range.

Editing

The next major area is editing and editing equipment. Editing equipment, spurred on by ENG requirements, has become very sophisticated. There are several different levels and price ranges of editing equipment. I will not limit my coverage to hardware prices alone, because a discussion of time-rental costs is more applicable to the majority of people. At the top of the line is "quad" or "2" editing. To use this type of system you would have to time-base correct your ½" or ¾" original to quad. At the same time a SMPTE timecode would be encoded on the tape. This would give a visual readout analogous to film frame numbers. Then edit points can be pinpointed by the frame. The duping and timecode costs run about \$100 an hour. Quad decks have the advantage of superior signal and the ability to do special effects such as fades, dissolves, tilting, etc. Most other systems will only perform straight cuts. Quad time is very expensive and runs approximately \$225 an hour.

In conjunction with quad editing is the CMX systems. There is "on-line" and "off-line" CMX editing. "On-line" refers to using quad machines. "Off-line" is done on ¾" cassette machines. The CMX system is a computer system that works on the SMPTE time code to perform all editing functions. The end product of CMX editing is a punched computer tape of the "menu" (edit order, type and length). It is possible to go back to the middle and change an edit length or sequence, and the computer will then adjust all the other edits accordingly in order. After working in the cheaper "off-line" method (\$75/hour + time code of ¾" originals), the punch tape can then be brought to an "on-line" system. The "on-line" quad system will then deliver a quad master exactly as the punch tape indicates. Therefore, as

O.D. FOR VERA CHYTILOVA

Lying in bed with a cold,
barbed wire strapped over my teeth—
Where is détente? Don't call.
Vera's far, far away,
liquidation likewise.

Love letters on the telephone—
who remembers them?
Whereas they computerize
complete dossiers
on every crime of creativity.

I lie with my cheek against my arm
and think of you—
your Czechoslovakian body
tumbling down the aisles
of adolescent love.

Here in Memphis,
we're filming prostitution, the police,
and politics which hit the whores who talk.
The press discuss magnolias,
while I close my eyes

and see *Daisies* once again.
We've exchanged buttered popcorn
in the drowsy, dim-lit theater,

and we're waiting for the pimpmobiles
to shine official headlights
on the marquee of your face
your freeze-framed face,
Hollywood-opening style.

Alexis Rafael Krasilovsky

Vera Chytilova is a Czech New Wave director whose film, *Daisies* (1966), established her international reputation. Unlike her colleagues Milos Forman and Ivan Passer, who came to the U.S. to continue their work after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, Chytilova stayed in her country. Since 1969, when she completed *Fruits of Paradise*, which won the Grand Prize at the Chicago Film Festival, Czech authorities have prevented her from working and have kept her in total isolation from the film community. Chytilova was invited to be the Special Festival Guest of Honor at the International Women's Film Festival held at the American Film Institute Theatre, Kennedy Center, in December 1975, but was prevented from accepting the invitation.

Following is a letter we received shortly after the festival:

"Dear friends, dear Ms. Krasilovsky,

Thank you for the honor which you have conferred on me. I'm very sorry again that I cannot participate in an event which is so important for me. Allow me therefore to convey greetings from a distance to the festival. I wish better fate for all its participants than the one which met me and my work. I would be very happy if one could succeed in organizing an international group of film women which would be capable of independently producing films about women. Perhaps then I would have some hope. Regardless, I hope that perhaps some day we will meet.

With Greetings,
Yours,
Vera Chytilova"

Please add to our petition drive by writing on her behalf to Film Export, Wenceslas Square, Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Alexis Rafael Krasilovsky, Chairperson
Film Festival Committee
International Women's Film Festival

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT
VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.
75 Horatio Street, New York, N.Y. 10014
Tel. 212-989-8366

PRINCIPLES OF THE ASSOCIATION

1. The Association is an organization of and for independent video and filmmakers.
2. The Association encourages excellence, commitment and independence; it stands for the principle that video and filmmaking is more than just a job, that it goes beyond economics to involve the expression of broad human values.
3. The Association works, through the combined efforts of the membership, to provide practical, informational, and moral support for independent video and filmmakers and is dedicated to insuring the survival and providing support for the continuing growth of independent video and filmmaking.
4. The Association does not limit its support to one genre, ideology, or aesthetic, but furthers diversity of vision in artistic and social consciousness.
5. The Association champions independent video and film as valuable, vital expressions of our culture and is determined to open, by mutual action, pathways toward exhibition of this work to the community at large.

MEMBERSHIP

Regular Membership is open to any person who is 1) involved or actively seeking involvement in independent video or filmmaking and 2) is committed to the principles of the Association.

Yearly dues for the Association are \$10.00. New members pay a one-time-only \$5.00 membership fee. *The membership fee and dues for new members in 1976 total \$15.00.* Those who join after September 1, 1976 pay \$10.00. All memberships are renewable on January 1, 1977.

Supporting Membership comes with a contribution of \$100.00 or more; *Sustaining Membership* with a contribution of \$250.00.

Membership entitles you to receive our monthly mailing as well as other reports prepared for distribution.

Mailing List Only: \$7.50 for New York City resident individuals; \$5.00 for individuals living outside New York City and all institutions, irrespective of geographic location.

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT
VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.

75 Horatio Street, New York, N.Y. 10014 - Phone 212-989-8366



MEMBERSHIP FORM

NOTE: Clear printing solves the unfamiliar-handwriting problem.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

If applicable:
Business Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Membership: ☐ Regular ☐ Supporting ☐ Sustaining

Professional skills and specialties: _____

What do you feel is the most important thing the Association can accomplish for you? _____

I hereby apply for membership in the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Inc., being qualified for the category of membership I have indicated.

Signature _____

Date _____

In the Beginning

The first plans to create an association for independent film and video people were hatched in the summer of 1973. With the support of the Center for Understanding Media, Ed Lynch spent nearly six months organizing before holding the first meeting in January 1974.

Below are some excerpts from the monthly newsletter of the Association.

February 4, 1974

The first meeting was good: nearly 70 filmmakers, with no illusions as to the difficulty, a general willingness to work, and an eagerness to get started. It was the first step toward association—sharing a part of the struggle for survival as working independent filmmakers. The meeting showed willingness and general agreement.

August 12, 1974

The newly incorporated Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, after several months of planning and organizational work, held its first official membership meeting on July 25. The 125 charter members adopted by-laws and principles of the Association and elected a seven-member Board of Directors. The principles of the Association center on providing "practical, informational, and moral support for independent video and filmmakers," encouraging "diversity of vision," and working for acceptance of independent film and video as "valuable and vital expressions of our culture". The members have joined together in the conviction that the practical problem of survival as an independent video or filmmaker is not one of craft. The problem is a combination of the character of the industry and the independent's isolation from, or distaste for, the conventional processes of funding and marketing.

November 7, 1974

.....Our basic position is that the AFI does not represent the film community, and, therefore, we are opposed to the bill to financially renew it.

December 8, 1974

It is almost the end of our first year. We have defied the critics and skeptics who have said that independent filmmakers were either too crazy or too selfish to get together and agree on anything. And we are being heard. Artists who have never worked together before may have a little more difficulty in the beginning. But after all, it is just the beginning.

January 9, 1975

We have had our victories. As most of you know, the bill to create a "new" American Film Institute was defeated. Perhaps we will have part of the credit for the defeat of the bill, but that is not the most important point. During the evolution of the fight, it became clear that there is a community of filmmakers, videomakers, educators, film librarians, museum administrators and other dedicated individuals who would work together to stop bad legislation.

April 11, 1975

I think that each of us understands, and always has, that we could use all of our precious time and energy selfishly, for our own individual survival. Then what, in the name of all funding sources, are we doing? I say, JUST THAT. Surviving. The difference is in the character of that survival. We want to work with a new sense of community.

May 16, 1975

We are about to begin our second summer and the difference between the two seasons, in the latest lingo, is a quantum leap. Last year at this time we were planning our legal birth. This year we have three hundred members and have had two festivals, ten presentations, many meetings and screenings.

During the last year I stopped holding my breath. The Association is no longer in my imagination or yours. It is no longer fragile. We can take a moment to look around, tend our various gardens, hold hands with our new friends.

VARIETY

Wednesday, January 7, 1976

Indie Filmmakers In Fear Of 'Educators' Riding Free

By JOHN HILLER

The Assoc. of Independent Video & Filmmakers Inc. stands in opposition to two proposed amendments of the Copyright Revision bill (H.R. 2223) currently pending in the House. The amendments would allow the National Education Assn. a statement of support for the education exemption amendment, and "We (educators) work for people not for profits." Lynch pointed out.

Wednesday, April 14, 1976

Anti-Oscar Night In Gotham; Hand Out Own 'Indies' Prizes

By GORDON HITCHENS

On Oscar night March 29 in completing "Organism," his fifth Hollywood, the independent film minute personal study of New York City, while busy with sponsored own counter-Oscar event complete films

Cash Divided
R.W. Altshuler Award of \$1,000

The New York Times

Why Congress Said No To the Film Institute

By GRACE LICHTENSTEIN

It was a small yet significant number of those who care passionately about the film in America. It brought no less a star than Charlton Heston or a big name.

Continued from Page 1

offend some of the politicians in the audience. People in the movie industry know AFI.

The idea of an independent AFI troubled an array of New York-based independent filmmakers, educators, and movie industry.

If the Government provided more funds... inseparable from the de-hate is the role of George Stevens Jr. himself, who has headed the AFI since its inception. His detractors blame him per-month for the institution's problems which they question. They all feel that Stevens, a leading man in Washington, social circles is seeking autonomy from the agency in order to...

MANHATTAN MOVIE MADNESS

NEW YORK

DEC. 29, 1975/JAN. 5, 1976

New York, You Oughta Be in Pictures

By Mark Jacobson

Downtown, in an enormous loft above a seething factory, Ed Lynch thinks he sees an opening. Ed who shot Major, Mud Dogs and Exploitation, and Woodstock is the...

Defining "real things" can be difficult, but there's a logic to this movement. If New York filmmakers need work, and the commercial theaters are dying for movies to show, why not fill the screen with ourselves? Besides, the entire history of New York film sensibility points to the same source: the movies again. All the but-

Filmmakers newsletter

December 1975

ICAP

by Judith McNally

While making a living in any aspect of film or video has never been especially easy for independents, the actual producing theatrical shorts has always been an unusually difficult distribution situation, especially on television. Theaters had never been especially welcoming, but television, once thought to be an outlet of almost unlimited potential for the independent, has proven resistant, if not downright hostile, to such work.

Our featured new feature on the generally bleak landscape is the recently formed Independent Cinema Artists and Producers (ICAP), a non-profit distribution company working exclusively with pay-cable TV as an outlet for independent filmmakers. ICAP, an outgrowth of the Independent Video Artists and Film makers, describes itself as "a unique effort to bring the worlds of art and commerce together for the benefit of both." In more mundane terms, ICAP's function is to negotiate with various pay cable systems around the country for the broadcast of independently produced films and tapes.

ICAP recently signed an agreement establishing an ongoing relationship with Home Box Office (owned by Time-Life), a software supplier to a number of pay-cable systems. While each film or tape is covered by a separate contract with the film or

administrative costs

Anytime someone has work or is the representative for cable TV rights, may submit a tape or film provided he is willing to guarantee the work does not infringe on any copyrights. All submissions must be reasonably current, that is, produced within the last two years. Films will be accepted only in 16mm with sound logical in magnetic Color is another requirement according to ICAP. HBO shares the aversion to black and white work so prevalent in television. At the moment HBO will only consider 2 reels. Work of any length is acceptable, including features, but usually they would relax their requirements to include other tape formats. Work of any length is acceptable, including features, but at the moment ICAP is working mainly with films and tapes of less than an hour in length. There are no restrictions on style or subject matter except, of course, that the content must be suitable for television broadcast.

One other critical requirement for submission is that the film or tape must not have been shown in television anywhere in the HBO markets. Ms. Morgan explained that there are virtually no exceptions to that rule, perhaps if a film of unusual merit had been shown on one local station several years ago, HBO might waive the requirement, but the situation involves so many "ifs" and "perhapses" as to be almost purely academic.

ICAP feels it's very important to point out that while cable TV

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.



**Connect
to the
Independent
Community**

Join AIVF

Indies Present Indies

THE FIRST ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY FOR INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILM.

Photographs by Randall Hagadorn.

Most Americans, if they remember March 29, 1976 at all, will remember it as the night when Elizabeth Taylor led the nation in her rousing version of "America the Beautiful," when people in 18th-century costumes performed the Bump on a rotating stage, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* swept the Academy Awards.

On that same night, however, the Association held its first annual Awards Ceremony. Two hundred and fifty film and video artists jammed the Fifth Avenue Hotel to honor each other's work and publicly recognize our common aspirations. It was a rare and warm evening.

The enthusiasm and financial support of Dan Sandberg of TVC Labs was the first catalyst for planning the evening. Late in 1975, he approached the Association with the idea of creating the R.W. Altschuler Award (named after his late friend and predecessor at TVC Labs) for excellence in independent filmmaking. A balloting of the Association membership yielded two winners who tied in a vote for the "person who contributed the most to independent film in 1975"; Victoria Hochberg and George Griffin shared the \$500.00 award. With awards and winners, a celebration was an inevitable next step.

Victoria Hochberg recently made *Metroliner*, a semi-abstract lyrical documentary of the American railroad.

George Griffin is an animation artist whose most recent work, "Head" is an ironic, surreal look at the relationship of animator to subject.

INDIE awards were also presented to ten others who either directly or through example had contributed toward independence in film and video.

The recipients were:

- Karen Cooper, Director of the Film Forum, one of the premier showcases of independent films in New York City, introduced as "maybe the only woman theatrical programmer in the United States; certainly the only one who painted her own box office."

- John Culkin, Director of the Center for Understanding Media and instrumental in the formation of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Inc.

- Ed Emshwiller, film and video artist who has contributed tirelessly to the creation of a community among independents through his involvement with the American Film Institute, The Filmmaker's Co-op, and the Association.

- Howard Guttenplan, Director of Millenium, a New York-based equipment center and, for many years now, an exhibition center for avant-garde film work.

- Nancy Hanks, Director of the National Endowment for the Arts. Ed Lynch jokingly described this as "our only blatantly self-serving award."

- Eleanor Perry and Frank Perry for independently producing *David and Lisa* in 1952 and hence serving as "godmother" and "godfather" respectively for independent theatrical feature makers. Amalie Rothschild, a member of New Day Films and AIVF Board Member, in presenting the INDIE to Ms. Perry, praised her for her advocacy of increased hiring of women in the motion-picture industry. "I admire you independents," Eleanor Perry said. "I admire your toughness. Voltaire said, 'To hold a pen is to be at war.' Well, the same is true of using a camera."

- Hilary Harris for his tenacity in making *Organism* over a fourteen-year period.

- Barbara Kopple, who, in documenting the struggles of coal miners in a film still in progress, has opened up new pathways for the financing of social documentary work.

- Nam June Paik, widely recognized as a founding father in the young world of video art.

- George Stoney, documentary film and tapemaker, film teacher and Director of the Alternate Media Center, for his involvement in community media and issues of public access.



AIVF president Ed Lynch and vice president Martha Coolidge present Indie Award to Ed Emshwiller for his long-time devotion to, and support of, independent film.



Dan Sandberg, President of TVC Laboratories



John Culkin: "To put the words 'Independent' and 'Association' back to back is gaudy stuff. Our part of the film community has not been known for its ecumenical spirit...there's been kind of a cold war going...so to watch what's happening here is really sensational..."

George Griffin, in accepting the R.W. Altschuler Award, reads from his fifth-grade report card: "George spends too much time drawing." In the background, Mrs. Ethel Altschuler, widow of R.W. Altschuler, and Ed Lynch.



Film as Business:

Reading the Fine Print in your Distribution Contract

Build your hut in the marketplace.
—Buddha

Romance Without Finance Ain't Got No Chance.
—Charlie Parker

by FREUDE

The Distribution Contract

This article begins with the assumption that you have or will find distribution for your film and need to understand the contract you will sign.

Contracts are so varied that it is impossible to discuss a "standard" one. I will name the items and considerations that are—or should be—common to all distribution contracts.

What follows is oriented toward "non-theatrical" distribution; that is, sale and rental to primary through high schools, colleges, universities, public libraries, film societies, churches, museums, community groups and specialized areas within this market such as medical schools, women's groups, art schools, et al. . . . in short, all market areas outside "theatrical" exhibition.

Exclusivity

Most distribution contracts are exclusive. This means that you have given the distributor sole rights to your films and you cannot enter into an agreement with any other distributor.

The cash investment in a film, necessary for effective promotion, is what prompts a distributor to ask for exclusivity. They do not want competition for an identical title when their dime is on the line.

Some exceptions to exclusivity are possible:

1. Not all distributors ask for exclusivity (though virtually all the large companies do). The Co-ops (Canyon Cinema in California; Center Cinema in Illinois; Filmmakers Co-op in New York) do not and some of the smaller or more specialized distribution companies do not.

2. You can ask for and sometimes receive permission to handle individual sales and rentals that might come directly to you. If this is agreed upon, have it in writing.

3. Let us say your film has both broad, general appeal and is also about a subject that has a small, specialized audience. You are negotiating with Distributor X who deals with the broad, general audience and you are willing to have Distributor X handle your film. However, Distributor Y deals extensively with the small, specialized market your film's subject also appeals to and Y would like to distribute your film in that market. In a case like this—where Distributor Y's market was not likely to conflict directly with Distributor X's interest—you should ask both distributors for a contract with "conditional" exclusivity—each contract specifically "excepting" the other. That is, your contract with X would read that they had exclusive rights with the following exception naming Distributor Y and vice versa in your contract with Y.

Term of the Contract

The term of the contract is the length of time that it applies. This varies from distributor to distributor ranging from seven years to forever. In a contract, "forever" is called in perpetuity and you do not want to sign on for this length of time. In fact, you want to sign for the shortest amount of time possible.

It takes at least a year for a distributor to make a film title known in the marketplace. The next two years will see the fruit of the first year's labor. This is the first "bloom" of the film and sometimes that is all there is. Other times, a film will rent and sell consistently for many years thereafter. This factor has a lot to do with the "subject" of the film. Many theatrical films that bomb at first or have been dead for years experience "revivals." This is seldom the case with non-theatrical films, however.

If you are reluctant to agree to the length of time specified in a contract because you are unsure of the distributor's ability to market your film effectively, try

negotiating the contract for the distributor's desired term but ask to insert a clause that stipulates if the distributor has not returned X amount of money to you within Y years—Y years being shorter than the contract term—the contract terminates and all rights revert to you. Y years should be a short amount of time, say two or three years, and X amount of money should be "within reason." It is perfectly proper for you to ask the distributor what amount she/he feels is "within reason." It is also a good idea for you to get an outside, "expert" opinion on what is "within reason."

Warranty to Distributor

All contracts contain a section where the filmmaker "assures" the distributor that the filmmaker does, in legal fact, own the "rights" she/he is granting to the distributor. This assurance means that you have the right to grant distribution rights; that you have not invaded anyone's privacy or that, if you have, you are in possession of releases; that you are not infringing on the rights of others, i.e., music rights, literary rights, etc.

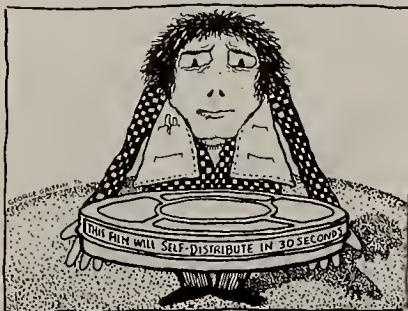
You also assure the distributor that there are no claims or litigation pending that could conceivably affect the right you hold.

In this same section it will usually say that the filmmaker agrees to "indemnify" and hold harmless the distributor against any legal judgments. This means that you accept all responsibility for damages incurred by the distributor should someone else's rights be declared paramount. The extent of your legal responsibility is spelled out in the terms of the indemnity. The indemnity may include not only judgments but also legal fees and court costs in the defense of any claim. If you are accepting responsibility for legal claims made by anyone contesting your rights, you should have the opportunity to control or at least consult with the defense.

Film Materials

A standard clause is that a negative of the film will be deposited with a laboratory and the distributor will have access to the negative for the purpose of making prints. Specify in the contract that the negative will be deposited in your name. Some distributors will agree to leaving your film in a laboratory of your choice.

Freude is both a filmmaker and a distributor. She runs SERIOUS BUSINESS CO., the West Coast based film distribution company.



This may not always be to your advantage unless there is some particular problem with your film that you feel only one special lab can handle.

Distributors have agreements and special price arrangements with their own laboratories. Because of the volume business they do with labs, they can get a better price on prints than you can as an individual producer and they may insist your negative be deposited with their lab. If it is deposited in their lab, it should still be deposited in your name. You should also include a clause that says you have the right to buy prints at cost directly from the distributor should you need to.

Never give up your originals. Unless you are selling your film outright (which is a bad idea, anyway), supply the distributor only with a negative—or with the originals only for the purpose of making a negative.

If you do not already have a negative and the distributor agrees to make the negative at her/his cost, or agrees to share the cost, write this into the contract.

Territory

There is the whole world to choose from when defining territory, and distributors frequently ask for it. You are not obliged nor is it frequently in your interest to sign an exclusive contract giving "world-wide" rights. You can limit the territory specifically.

After "world-wide" the most commonly asked for territory is "the United States and its territories and possessions and the ships that fly its flag" with "Canada" often thrown in, as well. There are now many good film distributors in Canada and you may wish to seek separate distribution there. There is not much market in Europe on the university level but there is a healthy television sale market and there again, you may wish to negotiate separately with a distributor or agent for Europe.

Media Rights: The Scope of the License

Regarding media rights, it is quite important to be specific. A contract will usually state under "rights" either theatrical or non-theatrical (or both) and television and then include the phrase "and other forms and sizes."

Sizes usually refers to guage. That is, a film you supply in 16mm may be reduced to Super 8 or blowup to 35mm.

Other forms can mean not only videotape, cassette, disc, etc., but also whatever "forms" may be invented during the term of your contract.

Television rights are commonly included in distribution contracts. Television is now a complex and varied marketplace including network, public, syndicated, cable, closed circuit, et al. You may wish to limit TV rights or to specifically exclude certain areas in the television market. You must exclude these specifically by name.

If you believe your film is appropriate for these other media and you want this potential exploited, you should question the distributor about her/his interest and ability to transfer and market your film in these ways. You should have the promise to do so in writing. You should also consider if the royalties paid to you under the "film" terms should also apply to these other forms or if you wish to receive a greater royalty in these special cases. If you do, this should be in the contract.

If you do not want to grant the right for any or all other "forms," the right(s) you wish to withhold should be set down explicitly in the contract as an exception to the rights otherwise granted and described.



"...No rna, you're a limited partner. You get yours only after deferments get theirs out of first monies from the producer's gross. Now remember, the producer's gross is really only 50% of the distributor's net—that is, the distributor's gross less the cost of..."

Royalties

Royalties are how and what you are paid. This is always stated in terms of percentages: Filmmaker will receive X percent of the revenue derived from the film. "X percent of the revenue derived" should be qualified by either "gross" or "net."

It is important that the percentage of "what" be clearly defined. Gross revenue means money received with no expenses deducted. Net indicates that some expenses will be deducted before your share is calculated. If your contract states a percentage of net, net must be clearly spelled out. What is being deducted to constitute net? Is it print cost only? Is it advertising and publicity? If it is advertising and publicity, forget it. Do not agree to it. There is really no acceptable way a distributor can determine accurately given advertising and promotion costs on a short film in this market.

Most medium to large distribution companies are now offering from 17 to 25% of the "gross" revenue. When a company offers a percentage of gross it means that they will absorb all distribution costs: print cost, advertising, postage, etc. There are some smaller companies that will offer 50% of the sales with the filmmaker and distributor sharing the cost of the prints. This is equivalent to 40% of the gross.

Make sure it is stated clearly how often you will receive an accounting. It should be at least twice yearly and you should name the number of days by which it is due within each accounting period (say, bi-annually, within the first 15 days of each six-month period). Does it say that the distributor will submit itemized statements along with your royalty check? You will want to know where your film has been seen and, unless specifically requested, very few distributors provide an itemized statement. You should also ask that the distributor forward to you all copies of advertising or publicity released or received relative to your film.

It is extremely important that when and how often you receive accountings be clearly defined because, in case of trouble, it is usually in this area that it will be easiest for you to claim breach of contract if you ever need or want to.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Film Festival Awards

You may wish to spell out procedure on film festivals. Does the distributor intend to enter your film in festivals? You may wish to reserve the right to enter your film in festivals yourself. If it is mutually agreeable that the distributor enter your film in festivals, you may wish to limit the royalty amount the distributor may take on prize money awarded to your film.

Advances

There are at least two advantages to advances. One, it is immediate money in the bank. Two, having advanced money, a distributor is more than likely to actively promote the film to regain her/his investment. Unfortunately, advances, unless you have a very hot property, are hard to come by. Distributors would rather invest the money directly in the film via

promotion and prints than in the filmmaker. It doesn't hurt to ask, however—especially if there is a great need for a film of the sort you've made and if you sense the distributor wants your film very much.

Breach of Contract

Breach of contract is the way out. If you are unhappy with the way your film is being distributed—for whatever reason—it is not reaching the audience you think it should; your royalty payments are non-existent or late or suspect for some reason; the film is being advertised or promoted in a way you consider inappropriate or exploitative, you may want to cancel your contract.

If you can find no other specific agreement that has been violated, if you have clearly spelled out the time period of royalty payments and if this schedule has not been followed to the letter by the distributor, you can claim breach of contract on that basis. It is for this reason important that you keep the statements sent to you by the distributor for reference and proof.

It is extremely important that you have a clause in the contract covering yourself in the event the distributor goes bankrupt. You want a clause that says:

(1) if the distributor should cease to be actively engaged in the distribution business, or (2) the distributor's business is liquidated, or (3) the distributor becomes bankrupt or makes an assignment for the benefit of its creditors; then your contract terminates and all rights revert back to you. Not only rights but all property relating to the film including the negative in the lab, the prints on the distributor's shelf and all monies due to the distributor with respect to your film.

General Considerations

Placing a film with a distributor is in some ways not unlike giving a child up for adoption. It is rarely possible to know your distributor personally.

The contract is a vital document. It is worth having a lawyer look at it before you sign it. Carl Sandberg did not say, "Nobody cries when a lawyer dies" for nothing, however. Even if your lawyer looks at it first (or last), it is important that you have read it and understand perfectly what it is you have agreed to.

This contract, however legally binding, is, after all, only a piece of paper. Though it is important that you be satisfied with the formal wording of your contract, you also want to have confidence in the way it is going to really function. This means it is a good idea to have confidence in your distributor.

If you are satisfied with the interest and understanding expressed by the distributor, a good way to investigate the distributor's effectiveness is to write to other filmmakers listed in the distributor's catalogue and ask about their experience. It is best to write to several filmmakers because any given person's experience may not be typical. Writing to the filmmakers in care of the distributor is as good a way as any to reach them. The distributor, if she/he wants your film, should be happy to forward such an inquiry.

YOU BE NICE,
YOU LOSE

—Andrew Carnegie

"Dear Horatio..."

Dear Horatio:

I have met someone who says that he "really cares for me," which sounds right, but he refused to come to my place (Bowery) and insists that I come up to his place. He lives on West 95th St. Question: Is this the real world?

—Esme

Dear E.

I have heard that it is easier to maintain a relationship between cities than between different parts of town. I have never heard of a successful get-together between boroughs that lasted without a move, and rather quickly. As to who travels in the first blush of romance, it depends on who is the adventurer, who has the nicest place (sun in the morning, room service, etc.) and who is the most insecure.

Dear Horatio,

Has anyone done any serious work on drug combinations? I get confused. For example, I'm fine on librium, weed, and a little bit of coke, but if I have a beer, I keep repeating myself and running into things. Or if I'm workin' on aspirin, B-12, and a little bit of dex and I take a toke, the walls start to curl and my mouth gets fuzzy around the edges. Or when I'm full out on soapers, gum, boats and stompers and I take a little bit of acid I can't remember which way I'm goin', if you know what I mean. So how'm I supposed to know what to take?

—Stompin' and stokin'

Dear S & S,

You're supposed to be doing exactly what you are doing, believe it or not. The way out from where you are is always confused with the way in. Not to be cute though, you do have one hell of a problem, and I feel that I should advise you to go to the one place that you will go anyhow—a good dealer who should try to keep you straight. It is good for business.

Dear Horatio,

Lately I've been feeling unquiet, like I'm living outside myself. Even the sand and the sunshine don't help. My friends tell me that I must be careful not to become my own perspective. Can you help me find my space? (I'm also looking for an apartment.)

—Confused on the Coast

Dear Confused,

For sure.

Dear Horatio:

I have small breasts and big feet so I know that I can never be an actress. What's in the future for five-year-olds, generally?

—Budding

Dear Bud,

Growth.

Dear Horatio,

My dog has a habit of whining when the TV is on, looking worried all the time, wanting to come into the bathroom when I take a bath and then staring at me, sniffing everyone's you-know-what, staring at me and everyone else with sad eyes when they are eating, but otherwise is a great dog! My (dog) psychiatrist says that it doesn't sound serious, but that I should come in for consultation. My neighbor says that I should join her "group". What do you think?

Dear Muddled,

I don't have a dog, but yours sounds normal, which is why I don't have a dog. But really—try and learn from Fido: sell your TV, relax, take your mutt in the tub, and feed the animal outside.

Forget about the group—those arrangements don't work in this country.

—Muddled



Copyright: All Rights Reserved?

by Tom Lennon

Copyright? Yes, copyright is this funny symbol which you put at the end of your film or tape when you're done. You put your name and the date. Maybe you add "ALL RIGHTS RESERVED" in bold type. And then no-one can use your film. Right?

Ask again. Copyright is a law, a very technical branch of law, that few people fully understand. The American copyright laws that are now on the books have been there, unchanged, since 1909. For almost a quarter of a century, Congress has wanted to revise the laws but they've never been able to come to a consensus. Sort of like Red Dye #2's relationship to the Food and Drug Administration: no one can deny that action is needed but there have been so many special and conflicting interests involved that it has been easier not to act.

Meanwhile, technology has altered the real problems of copyright. The invention of jukeboxes, television and photocopying, not to mention videotape, make statutes written in 1909 seem a little feeble. 1975 was supposed to be the year of Copyright but at the end of the Congressional sessions, hearings were still being held, a consensus still elusive. Very well, 1976 would be the year of Copyright. This time it seems that Congress means it. Chances are that by autumn we will have new copyright laws. And at stake in the copyright debate has been the very basis of our livelihood as film and video artists.

The so-called "educational exemption" to the Copyright Revision Bill was designed to permit schools, libraries, museums and other educational institutions to reproduce short films and videotapes as well as poems, short books and music without payment to the publishers or producers. Think about that for a moment. Schools, libraries, museums... without payment to the producers. The potential annihilation of our aspirations at self-sufficiency lay buried in the fine print of a little-publicized piece of legislation. Only that rare independent filmmaker whose support comes from theatrical distribution—and we can count them on the fingers of two hands, or is it one?—would have any economic base whatsoever to support his or her work. AIVF President Ed Lynch once compared copyright to the Ozone layer, just too remote to get worked up about... until perhaps you are forced to recognize the dimensions of what's at stake.

In order to first understand how legislation like the educational exemption could receive serious consideration in Congress, we have to take a couple of conceptual steps backward. Laws reflect society. The priorities of law reflect the values of the society that has enacted those laws. To look at the vast array of United States laws that concern transportation, for example, tells us that modern-day Americans are obsessed with the automobile. And so it is with Copyright. Bella Linden, an internationally recognized copyright expert and a vocal opponent of the educational exemption, came down to the Association meeting-place one evening and sketched out for us the history of copyright. It was founded during the middle ages when the prime concern in reproduction and copying was maintaining the integrity of religious texts being copied; it followed that the laws addressed themselves exclusively to the obligation of the copier to copy the scriptures accurately. After the invention of the press, publishing became an industry and an economic incentive had to be established which would induce writers to write. So copyright law was turned around to fill that need; in essence, it now made of literary and musical creations a marketable property, which in turn guaranteed the society of an ample supply of "creations" to feed their newly found industry. The basic function of copyright has remained unchanged since then. Now, in the 1970's, the proposed law undermines the "copy" "right" of the

Tom Lennon is the Administrative Director of the Association.

creator in favor of the educational institutions and the vast industrial concerns involved in technological reproduction, such as IBM and Xerox. That speaks eloquently, Bella Linden pointed out, to American societal values at this point in our history. We revere technology and we revere the educational complex and its host of symbols and degrees. Writers, musicians, media artists and poets don't figure quite so prominently in our priorities.

The educational institutions—and this applies equally to PBS, whose "Mathias" amendment I will discuss below—are facing some lean years. Massive quantities of federal money were injected into the libraries and schools in the sixties but the seventies have held out only the promise of cut-backs and fiscal austerity. With expenses spiralling and appropriations being reduced, there has been no alternative but to start axing personnel... unless, that is, the institutions can find a means of getting something for nothing. Which brings us to the educational exemption.

A school can't ask to be given its milk or its desks for free. And certainly it can't demand that Xerox Corporation donate a photocopying machine. But copyright? Copyright is a little different. It's less tangible. And artists and writers carry no electoral clout. The National Educational Association recognized an idea whose time had come and lumbered into action. "We work for people, not for profits!" they cried. It seemed plausible enough. At the hearings, young schoolteachers with long hair and beards testified about their plight in one-room schools in Appalachia, unable to afford textbooks and audio-visual materials. Meanwhile, defending the rights of the "copyright proprietors"—a term which in itself had very negative public relations value—were the likes of James Michener, John Hersey and the presidents of the publishing houses and film distributions companies. To the Senators, the message was clearly one of the poor versus the privileged. As Senator Pastore put it: "Why should the public have to pay composers and others in Hollywood? Those people make enough

money already." Kennedy waxed enthusiastic about the educational exemption; Mathias, Bayh and other liberals followed suit. Those who defended the integrity of copyright found themselves allied with Senator Hruska, Senator McClellan and the militant right.

The educational exemption was at its core an attempt at expropriation. It was expected that it would come under attack from conservatives who regard it as governmental meddling in the sacred arena of private property. Although many AIVF members might describe themselves as socialists of one hue or another, we found ourselves in agreement with the conservatives, defending our right to function in the free-market system, for the educational exemption called for the total destruction of a marketplace while providing for no system with which to replace it. It is sometimes said that America's economic system is one of capitalism for the poor and socialism for the rich and both proposed amendments to the Copyright Revision Bill vividly illustrate that wry observation.

Putting aside for a moment our interests as film and video artists, let's consider the implications of the educational exemption for the country as a whole. The economic basis for the production of audio-visual materials would disappear overnight. The schools and libraries would enjoy an orgy of videotaping for a couple of years. No new films or tapes, however, would be available to replace obsolete work. The institutions would have to look to the vast corporations for new (free) films. The government would be forced to stimulate production or go into production itself, offsetting any short-term economic gains made by reducing educational budgets. Meanwhile, the independent voice, always fragile in film and television, will have been silenced. Who would make the films on Watergate, on Cuba, on Methadone treatment, on any of the thousands of topics which government and industry would rather not see in the mainstream of public information channels?

Through our lawyer, Bob Kline, the Association learned of the copyright legislation in the fall of 1975, late in the legislative process. The bill was already out of committee in the Senate and imminently due to be voted on. The House was (and still is) trailing the Senate, but it, too, had closed its doors in order to



"The educational exemption called for the total destruction of a marketplace while providing no system with which to replace it."

"mark up" the bill and heard no more testimony. We had to accept the fact that we were not in a position to propose legislation. We put aside thoughts of possible copyright systems we might have proposed to Congress, such as a clearinghouse for film and video artists, on the model of ASCAP, which would pay royalties to artists whenever their work was reproduced on video tape. We had to support or oppose the bill and its amendments as they were presently written. We put all of our efforts into defeating two proposed amendments to the body of the bill: the educational exemption, already described, and the Mathias amendment.

The educational exemption is, at first reading, an evident horror. The Mathias amendment eludes such simple definition. It provides for the compulsory licensing of non-dramatic literary works, as well as sculptural, musical, graphic and pictorial (not film or video) works to public broadcasting corporations at a fixed fee to be determined by a governmental agency. Under the system which Senator Mathias put forward, a PBS station, should it want to use excerpts or ideas from *Future Shock*, for example, does not have to contact Alvin Toffler, but merely file, *post facto*, a notice of use with a centralized copyright agency. If, at the end of the year, Alvin Toffler or his agent contacts the agency, he will discover that PBS has used his work and that he is entitled to a given sum of money. (Stanley Kunitz, the poet, estimated he would collect ten cents if his poetry were read over the air.) Toffler would have no right to refuse PBS the use of his book. If he deems insufficient the fee allocated to him, he can appeal his case to the ominously-named Copyright Royalty Tribunal; any extra monies would be given to him after deducting "reasonable administrative expenses" (!) for the cost of the appeal.

The Mathias Amendment is a complex, hastily conceived bill which no one—certainly not its sponsor—appears to fully understand. Basically, it grants to PBS a privileged relationship to copyrighted literature and music. PBS claims that it is merely seeking to streamline the process of obtaining rights to copyrighted material, a process so time-consuming, supposedly, that it discourages local stations from putting together their own programs. A plausible argument. But when asked if they would limit the Mathias Amendment to programs which are being used for local, one-time use only, the PBS lawyers showed no interest, revealing that, more probably, they are simply looking for areas in which they can cut major costs. Mike Klipper from Senator Mathias' office conceded that this was the aim of the bill.

The Association talked to no one who could or would satisfactorily explain the long-term implications of the bill. Even as we raced from one Senate office to another trying to figure out how the *hell* you get from the Longworth to the Rayburn Building, one of us would be muttering, "Could someone just explain to me again why we're opposed to the Mathias Amendment?" The New York Times published an editorial opposing the Mathias Amendment; its editorial arguments were based on a misreading of the bill.

AIVF finds the Mathias Amendment objectionable on numerous counts. It would create a bureaucracy of vast proportions. Within the workings of that bureaucracy, the author of a non-dramatic literary work loses the right to choose the producer of his or her work, because PBS has automatic access to it. PBS can accidentally or intentionally misrepresent that work in its visual reinterpretation of it. It can suppress ideas that it finds not to its liking. Independent film and video artists will be highly reluctant to produce documentary works which draw on literary material since exclusive rights to that material will no longer be

available. Finally, the Mathias Amendment heavily "taxes" authors, musicians and filmmakers rather than distribute the burden of supporting public television equally among American taxpayers.

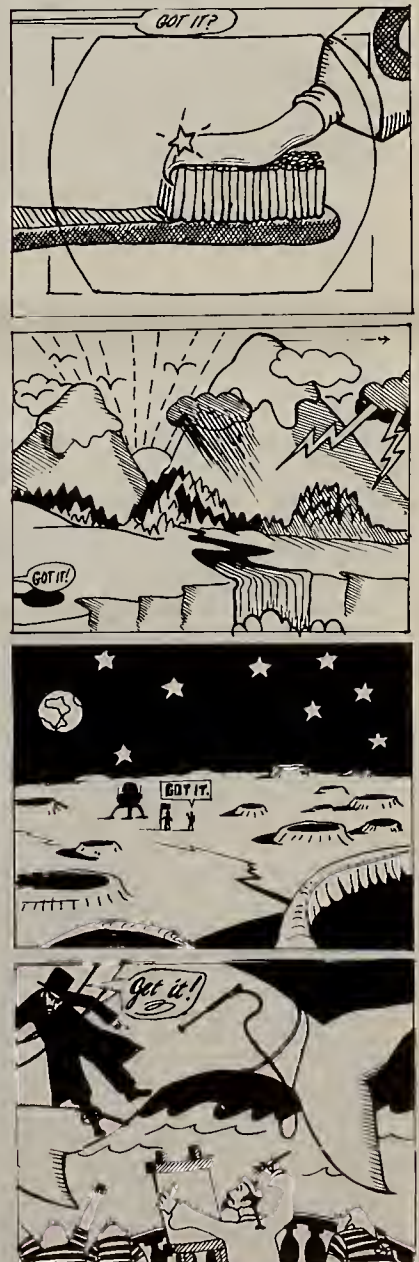
Having just waded your way through the grey prose of the preceding paragraphs, you will understand why it wasn't immediately easy to get the independent media community aroused about copyright. "It doesn't have sex, it doesn't have power, it doesn't have money—how are you planning to get anyone interested?" a legislative assistant was to sneer, later, when we were in Washington.

Bob Kline and Don Connors, a filmmaker, drafted a statement which was sent to all members of the House Judiciary Committee, of which the Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties and the Administration of Justice, which handles copyright, is a part. We received a smattering of form letters in reply. Bella Linden's presentation in December made it clear that we should mobilize to go down to Washington and make ourselves heard in person. John Hiller, a film-editor and a new member of the Association, threw himself into the task of mobilizing an educational campaign. We had to play our desire to mount a thoroughly impressive "uptown-style" effort against the limits of our energy and resources—we were a one-person staff—and no one knew for sure when the bill would come to the Senate floor. It could be any day. In soliciting appointments with legislators over the telephone, John became a master of the technique of intimidation through silence. First comes the pitch in a resonant voice, then the confident request for an appointment, followed by the protest of the legislative aide: "But the Congressman has hearings for most of the morning... (silence from our end)... the vote on the cut-off of funds for Angola is scheduled for that day... normally the Congressman will only see constituents on this issue... well, how about for ten minutes, absolute maximum, at eleven?" Two cars, ten filmmakers and two dozen appointments jelled for the last days of January and we were off.

Into Washington in the driving rain long after midnight. We stayed with friends. The first appointment the next day, at eight in the morning, is with Susan Englehart, a lobbyist for the American Association of Publishers. There we link up with two Washington filmmakers from a fledgling organization called the Washington Area Filmmaker's League, formed along lines similar to AIVF. Susan Englehart's report: The educational exemption is not part of the bill as passed out of the Senate committee but it may well be introduced on the floor. The Mathias Amendment is in the bill and still at this late date no Senator has agreed to sponsor an amendment to delete that amendment. Rumor has it that Mathias might not oppose such an amendment-to-remove-the-amendment but no one is sure and Mathias is stalling.

Into taxis for our appointment with Representative Charles Wiggins, the conservative from California who achieved notoriety last year during the House hearings on Nixon's impeachment. Wiggins listened intently to what we said and asked precise questions. He sympathized with our opposition to the educational exemption; beyond that, he sought from us details on the economics of audio-visual production and reproduction. "Yeah, I get it," he said, "you're the little guys who stand to get wiped out." He surveyed our tousled hair and clothes and broke into a wide grin, his eyes twinkling. "In effect, you're the operators of small businesses... you're a bunch of right-wingers!" We smiled uncomfortably, looked down, shifted in our seats. Until we saw him mischievously enjoying our embarrassment, relishing the

DOCUMENTARY MOMENT



"The larger issues of free speech and copyright integrity were being lost while the vested interests divvied up the spoils."

irony of our agreeing with him, and then we laughed too. It was a human moment, shared as we shuffled out of his office into the maze of corridors.

We reached the office of every member of the House Subcommittee. Our sense was that support for the educational exemption was not strong and that our presence was making further inroads against it. But most members' opposition to the amendments stopped short of a promise to oppose it and, furthermore, we had difficulty knowing how much we could trust of what we were told.

Since the bill was out of committee on the Senate side, we had to speak to as many Senators and aides as we could reach. Clearly, we were filling a need. The legislative aides, who do much of the decision-making on the less political issues, were for the most part ill-informed about copyright problems specific to audio-visual materials. A highly successful educational film might sell five hundred prints, while books are counted in the hundreds of thousands; this difference, for example, was a revelation to many on the Hill. "Let's see," said one aide who was involved in drafting the legislation on the House side, "what audio-visual media are there? There's film. What else? What? Video? I see..." and then he listened while we explained.

I had always thought of lobbyists as sinister men with elegant blue suits and vast expense accounts who enticed our legislators into passing disastrous legislation in return for trips to the Caribbean. And we found that there was truth to that image. But lobbyists also supply legislators with information and expertise that they would otherwise have no access to. Which is great. Except that some segments of society can afford lobbyists and others can't. Twenty minutes before a vote, the legislative aide sifts through all the material that has been sent to his office on any given issue and on the strength of that material advises his Senator how to vote. They won't be swayed by arguments which never reach them. If the needs of independent film and video artists are callously disregarded in legislation, it must also be true that, just as often, they are merely overlooked. At the risk of sounding humorous, I will say that the legislators were often grateful that we had reached them with our point of view.

We argued for a full hour with the aide whom Bella Linden had previously identified as central, perhaps more than any man on the Senate side, to the drafting and support of both the educational and Mathias amendments. "I can see the thing from your point of view, I guess," he conceded at the end. "You see, until now, the only people arguing your side of the case have been a bunch of ass-holes from Time-Life and I don't care what happens to them."

Supposed allies and supposed foes were repeatedly a source of surprise. We sought to interest the American Film Institute in the copyright issue. Several weeks before our group trip to Capitol Hill, Martha Cooldige had to go down to Washington for the opening of her film. She took the opportunity to meet with Michael Webb at the AFI, talk about the pending legislation and drop off our printed literature. Three weeks passed: no word. We were collecting names to sign a joint statement of opposition to the legislation and called Webb to ask if he, individually, or the AFI, collectively, wished to put their names to our statement. No, he explained, he could not take a position, but when we're down here, he would be willing to talk to us more about it. With appointments scheduled back to back, that was unfeasible. We never heard from the AFI since. At this writing, the American Film Institute, whose mandate and generous budget are to further the growth of film in the United States, has remained mute on an issue which would have devastated a whole segment of the filmmaking community.

Meanwhile, I confess to a lingering affection for Mike Klipper, Senator Mathias' legislative aide. We met him in the Senate's basement cafeteria. He bought a Pepsi from the soda machine and sat down with ten filmmakers crowding around him in the booth. We barraged him. What would the Mathias Amendment achieve that more funds directly allocated to PBS would not accomplish more efficiently? What about the potential suppression of ideas? What does the bill mean by a work's "adaptation"? This amendment, he explained, was written before he was working for the Senator. Although he must have been over thirty years of age, he would have passed for a college student. His mouth turned up at the corners in a look of almost boyish embarrassment as we debated the value of the bill. He mentioned a book. "I haven't read it," Phil Messina retorted, "but I guess I'll soon be able to catch it on PBS instead." Aware of our numerical advantage, we relented, but he urged us on. It was seven in the evening before he said he had to leave. As we got up to go, he pressed us with more questions. How did we get down to Washington? Did we have places to stay? Did we know so-and-so, now a filmmaker, formerly his roommate in college? Inwardly, he seemed to feel that the Mathias Amendment was a mistake. And we apparently embodied for him a rebelliousness, a different consciousness, that he wanted to feel was not dead in him.

After two long days, we drove back to New York, talked out and frazzled, but satisfied. A few days elapsed and John Hiller then made a follow-up call to Susan Englehart. She was seemingly jubilant. "You people are in the wrong business!" she said. "You stirred up the whole place. You turned the tide." The day after we left, Humphrey had agreed to sponsor an amendment to remove the Mathias Amendment. Senators Cranston and Buckley were to co-sponsor the bill. We could hardly have hoped for a more powerful coalition representing, as they did, the complete ideological and geographical range of the country. To us, victory on both amendments seemed highly probable. Susan Englehart concurred.

With relief, we turned back to our daily chores. The day before the vote, in a briefing to the New York Film Council, Ed Lynch all but claimed credit for the imminent defeat of the amendments. Yes, we were a little naive. Then came the stunning news. The Mathias Amendment had passed. A couple of days before the vote, Senator Pastore had made a powerful emotional appeal for the survival of PBS: "Have we lost our confidence in humankind to be fair? Let me conclude by saying, God save public broadcasting!" PBS, in Congress, is apple pie. Humphrey withdrew his sponsorship of the anti-Mathias amendment at the last minute. Cranston and Buckley hastily redrafted their amendment so as to merely require inclusion in the Mathias Amendment of a right-to-veto on the part of the artist. But that amendment was voted down by a comfortable margin.

In our disappointment, we hardly noticed the good news, namely that the educational exemption had not been introduced on the floor of the Senate. Whether our presence influenced the decision of the proponents of the educational exemption not to attempt a floor vote, we have no way of knowing.

We will also never know what manner of secret pacts and gentlemanly agreements led to the sudden drama in the voting of the Mathias Amendment. The vote was for us an instant education in the manners and methods of American politics. Certainly, we had been manipulated. We don't even fully understand all the *whos* and *whys*. That kind of intrigue is finally not very interesting, unless perhaps you're being paid a fat salary to play at it full time.

We watched from New York while the educational

exemption died a slow but inexorable death in the House subcommittee. We were partially instrumental in getting major articles published on the Mathias Amendment in the *Village Voice*, *Variety* and the *New York Times*. But the PBS lawyers were negotiating with the publishers and with ASCAP and the larger issues of free speech and copyright integrity were being lost while the vested interests divvied up the spoils. We had neither the desire nor the resources to involve ourselves in such negotiations.

The music and publishing interests hope to kill it in the House. If they are not strong enough to do so, they can quite possibly remove the worst teeth from the bill through the inclusion, for example, of an artist's right to veto.

In helping to defeat the educational exemption and in bringing the issue of copyright into the public forum, we had largely fulfilled our immediate task. In doing so, we had succeeded only in upholding the *status quo* in the face of a potential calamity. For an independent maker of films or tapes, the *status quo* is hardly cause for celebration. With or without the blessings of the law, the Xerox and Sony machines will remain busy in the universities, systematically ripping off the artist. Are photocopying and videotaping machines to be licensed, as they are in Germany, where each use brings a royalty to the creator? The systems of information dissemination in this country remain tightly controlled; the artist at one end and the public at the other are impoverished as a result. Amid all the debate and machinations surrounding the copyright controversy, the corporate stranglehold over the flow of information has yet to be seriously challenged or even discussed. □

SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS

The pace of the Big City slackens somewhat during July and August, but listed below are some highlights of independent film and video happenings in store for the summer:

- June 17th & 18th at The Kitchen: It's a Living: Chicago '76. Videotapes by Skip Lumberg, Maxi Cohen and Joel Gold about working and making a living.

- Stan Brakhage will be coming through the city. He will be present at a screening of his work at Millenium Film Workshop, also on June 19th, and will teach an intensive two-week seminar at NYU entitled "Shamanism: Story-Telling and Film."

- The Fourth Women's Video Festival will run through June 27th, Thursdays through Sundays, at the Women's InterArt Center, 549 W. 52nd St.

- Ken Jacobs, with his film "Star Spangled to Death", will hold a concert-performance: "FLOP: FOURTH OF JULY, 1976" at the Collective for Living Cinema, 52 White St., on July 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 8 PM.

- The First Annual Celebration of Cinema & Art will take place on the historic grounds of Lyndhurst Castle in Tarrytown. The grounds will be open for picnicking at 6 PM and video, film and performance pieces will start at dusk. Sponsored by the Film Workshop of Westchester and AIVF.

- Through July 4th, the Whitney Museum will be featuring its first regular programming of Video Art.

- The 1976 Robert Flaherty Film Seminar will be held from August 28th through September 4th in Chestnut Hills, Mass. For details about this week-long residential seminar on documentary film, contact International Film Seminars, Tel. CI 7-5536. Deadline for submitting work for program consideration: July 15.

Title

"Comin' Home" (Box Office, that is)

by
Kitty Morgan

Distribution of independently produced films and tapes has often been a rather grim business. In September, several members of the AIVF helped to form a new organization, called ICAP, which has been attempting to open up a new market for film and video artists.

ICAP, Independent Cinema Artists and Producers, was set up to pre-screen films and negotiate for their showings on pay-cable television systems. ICAP's activities have been undergoing changes, as the entire cable industry has been rapidly transforming the communications field.

Pay-cable television systems are quite different from the commercial networks. The viewer pays a certain amount to be hooked up to the basic cable service, and an extra fee to receive the pay channel. The largest pay-cable system is Home Box Office, which shows special programming uninterrupted by commercials. Home Box Office's main fare consists of features and sports, but in September, they began to take independent shorts, which ICAP brought to them.

ICAP began as the Cable Committee of the AIVF. Charles Levine originated the idea for putting independent programming on a pay cable system as an experiment to show that a real audience exists for independent works. The Cable Committee drew up plans for an experiment which would involve the use of special hardware and marketing for independent works. The experiment would seek to show that independent programming, if handled properly, can attract enough of the audience to be economically viable. Because pay cable television has such a large audience potential, and can involve the direct payment for programming (rather than through commercials), it could create a vast new market for independent artists. A proposal for this experiment was submitted to the New York State Council on the Arts last spring. (Some seed money has subsequently been granted.)

It was during the research for this experiment that talks began with Home Box Office. Though they were not interested in running a controlled experiment, they were very eager to start screening independent works right away. The Cable Committee decided to form a new organization which would handle negotiations with HBO.

ICAP is a non-profit, unincorporated association, that has applied for tax-exempt status. The Executive Coordinators are Charles Levine, Kitty Morgan, and Marc N. Weiss. We are filmmakers ourselves, and act on behalf of the artist. ICAP draws up a non-exclusive contract with the artist, authorizing us to negotiate with pay-cable systems. No agreements with the systems are signed without the artist's consent.

When we first began dealing with HBO, they only went into four Northeastern states, and had less than 200,000 subscribers. Now, they have a national satellite system and go into several states, including the South and West. They have about 300,000 subscribers, and are growing rapidly.

Their main fare is feature films (about 60%), sports (about 30%), and specials, including shorts (about 10%). Their monthly subscription fee ranges between \$6-\$10. Most of their features are first-run, still enjoying theatrical showings. They consider shorts to be filler material, to be shown between their main offering.

At the time we began to talk to them, HBO had a

Kitty Morgan is co-founder and director of ICAP and a member of AVF's Board of Directors.

standard contract for shorts which paid a flat fee for an unlimited number of runs. They simply paid a certain amount per minute, and used the films as often as they liked for three months.

We negotiated a contract in which there would be a payment for every showing, and a guarantee of 6 showings. We also insisted on an escalation clause, whereby the basic fee would increase as the number of subscribers increased. This was considered quite a breakthrough.

Usually, a short film would be run between 10-50 times during its one-year contract. With our contract, a half-hour film shown on HBO 10-20 times would make \$1000 or more. With the old contract, it would make about half that amount, or less. Unlike distributors, which usually take 50% or more, ICAP retains 25% for administrative costs, and gives 75% to the artist.

In September, ICAP had its first showing on HBO. We had a good rapport with someone in the programming department, who really enjoyed our films. A couple of months later, he left the department, and there was no one around to take up the cause of independent works. The heads of the department came from the theatrical buying world, and were accustomed to thinking of shorts as insignificant. They devote almost all of their time to features and have expressed little interest in continuing to look at any shorts.

At this time, HBO is reevaluating its position, and we expect to have a series of meetings with them soon. In the meantime, they continue to re-run the shorts we took to them in the fall, and the filmmakers are still getting checks for these runs. Since HBO's attitude towards shorts is unclear, ICAP has begun to deal with other pay cable systems. Many of the other systems don't even know that this kind of programming exists, and we are in the process of creating a promotional campaign for independent works.

The idea behind ICAP was originally much broader than HBO—if pay cable keeps spreading as rapidly as it has recently, it could provide a real revolution in the economics of arts programming. Audiences will have access to a greater variety of programming, and will pay directly for it. Lincoln Center has been exploring the possibility of using pay cable to increase its audience and its revenues. Thus, pay cable could increase the support of musicians, dancers, and perhaps all the arts.

Advocates for pay-TV insist that it will become more widespread. They say that the networks are not free, since the public pays for the advertising of each commercial. The consumer is paying for everything on TV right now; why not just pay for what you watch?

Some insist that the per-program billing system will proliferate. Rather than a flat monthly subscription fee, this kind of billing involves the use of a computer which monitors what is being watched and only bills the customer for those programs. Probably pressure will come from the sporting events, people who would like to get \$50 or \$100 or whatever, for a prize fight. With a monthly billing system, they could not get that kind of money from each subscriber. However, with a per-program system, they could command those kinds of sums.

It is important for us as artists and producers to keep aware of this technology and try to find ways to use it to our advantage. With the advent of pay-TV and video discs, we could finally find the wide audience and support we need as independent artists. We

must be aware of the possibilities and fight for our interests.

One concept behind ICAP is that it could eventually function like ASCAP, protecting the rights of artists and assuring the payment of royalties. With the explosion of communications technology, there could be the need for a body that would monitor the uses of visual material and see that fees are paid accordingly. If such an organization is set up, it should be done with the interests of the artist in mind. It should not be done by the business world, nor by the government. We could have the power to change the economics of our lives.

ICAP requests that any correspondence regarding its activities be addressed to P.O. Box 775, New York, New York, 10013. Please do not send films without writing first. It is difficult for us to handle tapes at this time, but we hope that will change. We are in the process of making plans for the future and welcome volunteers, both for the AIVF cable experiment and for ICAP. Please contact Thomas Lennon at 212-989-8366 for our new telephone number. □

EDITORIAL JUDGEMENT

Film glides through her fingers and is known.

Messengers clutter; laboratories call;
More white leader is badly needed;
silence evaporates.

On the next table the boy reads dailies.
Time creaks on rewinds.

How each film resembles the others!
Gentle beginnings, estimable searchings,
Clockwork smiles, courtly disasters:
lusts reducible to excitement.

Her mind is hinge to images.
Ideas work or they do not.
In this room days will splice together;
Empty nights, as useless flash frames
fall, and be forgotten.

Beauty is repeatable, truth compatible,
Art is enough,
but that it charges the heart to want
with tendrils of expectation,
with leaves of promised glory.

She says:
Not now, please, not now.
I have no time for this, for you,
nor will there be
that elegance of pleasure in small things
I have come to understand as love.

Film floods me, immobile,
even as I seize it with my mind.
In tide pools, in shadows,
the moviola nightmares lie,
unseen cues that overwhelm
when hand and eyes no longer control
what the brain may see.

I view not what is, but what will be,
Anticipating the gloss of dissolves,
color corrections, magic effects,
a most subtle mix.
When film is finished I know nothing of it.
It escapes me. Fits neatly into a can.
I am dismembered as I assemble.

I war with dreams, and lose.

—Tom Schachtman

White Ox Films: Funding the Future

by David Tulbert

White Ox Films, Inc., is a non-profit film organization based in Rochester, New York. Its purpose is to harness the as yet untapped potential of the film and television media by developing new conceptual, technical and practical systems in the field of cinema technology, aesthetics and communications. Our primary purpose, however, is the use of such systems, once developed, to create films that are positive, healing and uplifting. We hope to give an overview of the ways in which we feel film and TV can be used to further the evolution of mankind by providing deeper, more total communications, particularly in the realm of art.

There is no doubt that the works of filmmakers like Brakhage and Baillie, and the other pioneers of experimental film, have shown us the existence of an enormous potential—the potential of moving-picture communications. As sophisticated as these art works may appear by current criteria, they are really the early beginnings of the artistic development of a medium still in its infancy. Perhaps in 500 years the works of these artists, which are misunderstood or not understood at all by the general public, will be seen as the first nuggets from the enormous gold mine of moving-picture communications. It is communications which distinguishes a society from a mere aggregate of individuals, and humanity has great need of trans-verbal communications like film/TV to establish a world society (which, of course, must depend on trans-verbal communications). The media, because their communication is so rich and deep, can also increase the social cohesiveness of individual cultures. It is the purpose of White Ox to develop and make public whatever technology and knowledge is needed to place these media completely in the hands of the public.

One night in January 1965, my roommate dragged me to see some "experimental films (whatever the hell they were) by some West Coast "bohemian" (at that time "hippies" had not yet replaced "beatniks") named Stan Brakhage. The showing was at the Cambridge Public Library. After a rather wordy introduction by a local self-proclaimed film aficionado (and Brakhage's quick put-down of him), we saw "Dog Star Man", and a couple of Brakhage's other films. (I am giving this history to show what the scene was like in those days. In Cambridge, one of the country's leading intellectual centers, Brakhage was playing and speaking before a house of maybe 75 people!) I was absolutely transfixed by the films. They showed me how I could work the image streams in my head directly onto the screen and not have to grapple with an abstract language like poetry to describe them on the printed page.

I dropped out of school, took a night course at Boston University, bought an 8mm camera (this was before Super 8), and started shooting like mad. I must have shot about 5000 feet of 8mm film in two months. Through the course at Boston University and this intensive shooting in 8mm, I got a good grasp of how to use image structures, i.e., montage editing, and how to use the camera to get abstract effects. Between '65 and '67, I made a couple of films using an 8mm Bolex and had them blown up to 16mm. They were done from script, but all the fades, dissolves and complex matteing was done in camera. A soundtrack, including voice-over poetry and avant-garde jazz, was mixed at the M.I.T. radio station and put onto one of the films titled "Stasis."

Quite by accident, this film was screened at a colloquium of senior M.I.T. Humanities majors, and subsequently I was able to return to school and make a film for my thesis. I even got a small grant which covered stock costs and the construction of a special machine that allowed me to pre-program complex fades in the field and thus attain complete control

over visual rhythm. I was, and am, very concerned with the question of control of the medium's substance. I worked from graphic scripts and used the machine to implement them. The idea was that the film went directly from my head onto a graphic script that specified all the details of camera movement, image intensity, etc., on paper. In this way, I avoided, during the creative process, any interference from the machinery of filmmaking. The shooting and editing processes were merely the mechanical implementation of that "ideal" as expressed in the script.

The film went way over budget (it was 27 minutes long) and was never completed, though I still have the script, the original footage, and the machine. My thesis advisor accepted the script, the machine and raw footage as satisfying the requirements of my thesis, and I graduated in 1969.

During the period 1967 to '70, I also got involved in the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T. and worked under Gyorgy Kepes as a graduate student. I did some kinetic sculpture design and a lot of investigation of the topic of mathematical aesthetics. Since Pythagoras' time, this has been a field of study that has woven through the history of art. I studied in great depth Joseph Schillinger's MATHEMATICAL BASIS OF THE ARTS, which was very enlightening because it proved the idea that artistic structure could be abstractly described in mathematical language with great versatility and elegance. Moreover, these structures can then be applied equally well to all the arts including music, dance, sculpture and, of course, film. It was particularly interesting because it provided a rational descriptive language that could be used to unify the rhythms, camera movements, etc., in a film. The system could also unify the tonal quality and rhythm of the soundtrack with the image structure. It was possible because of the generalness of Schillinger's approach to do all this rationally with a high degree of well-formedness (in the aesthetic sense) and without resorting to "Micky-Mousing"; i.e., creating a too literal correlation between the rhythms and moods of the sound and those of the picture.

With Kepes' help, and a good deal of internal politicking, I managed to obtain access to a very sophisticated graphics computer that would create images in real-time. After a few months of struggling through the programming manuals, I managed to make a programming that would accept as input

numerically described structures and could apply them to the rate of movement, angular trajectory, and distances of images. Our images were a set of eight spheres which moved in three dimensions, kind of like 3-D billiards. I did a good deal of experimenting with this system by using different sets of Schillinger structures as well as random numbers, and noting the results. The results proved conclusively that for the great majority of viewers, Schillinger's system would harmonize the movements and create pleasing and beautiful movies. Of course, our images were purely in the abstract realm, but the important thing was that the system increased the filmmaker's structural vocabulary enormously. Moreover, it gave the filmmaker a rational system for creating and using structures to control image streams or modulations that cut across the boundaries of music/film. It also allowed the artist, without cramping his or her style, to harmonize pans, zooms, fades, live action, etc. The system, once grasped, makes possible the creation of highly well-formed structures.

I would have very much liked to continue this research, but there were other forces acting in my life leading me in a new direction. Someone gave me THE THREE PILLARS OF ZEN by Philip Kapleau and, after reading it and trying some meditation, I felt a strong attraction to Zen. I sold all my possessions and moved to Rochester to study Zen (which explains why White Ox is in Rochester).

Since we're really talking about film here and not Zen, I will by-pass what proved to be an intensive three year learning experience. I learned that it was necessary for me to act from an ego-less, uninvolved state, especially with respect to my art, and to serve mankind according to my particular predilection but without concern for my "self".

Out of these realizations came the desire to work again on film. The result was that I formed White Ox Films, which became incorporated in 1972. The government provided us with a corporate seal, but not much else. We began by putting on an exhibition series of fine feature films and experimental shorts. The project was a joint effort with the local art gallery which had enough of a budget to pick up any deficit the project might incur. Through this program, which was, by and large, successful, we began to establish a "track record". I say "by and large" successful because at that time there was no art-film interest in

White Ox Director David Tulbert emphasizes point at Film Art Seminar.



David Tulbert is the founder and director of White Ox Films, Inc.



Todd Spence edits 16mm film at Cinemedia.

Rochester, at least for current works, and certainly no interest in experimental filmmaking. But we pulled in reasonable numbers of people and almost broke even.

Meanwhile, we had applied to the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) for funds for two projects, Film Farm, an intensive eight week summer workshop for gifted high school students, and Summer Dreams, a series of free outdoor films that were selected to stimulate feelings of brotherhood and joy in the audience. They were popular films, such as "Yellow Submarine", but were chosen quite carefully. The films were preceded by experimental shorts. The Highland Bowl of Rochester, where the films were screened, is a large outdoor natural amphitheatre located in a park. There are benches for about 600 people and room on the grass for about ten thousand more. Because we had a bit of a track record, because NYSCA liked the ideas, and because Peter Bradley (director of NYSCA's Film/TV department) had met with us and determined that we were a reasonably together group, we got the grant and did the programs. Both were very successful. Thousands attended the films and the students in Film Farm got a very fine, creatively oriented film course.

The idea behind these two projects was that we would start small and have a "shake-down cruise" to see if we could really do projects. We wanted to do this before we locked ourselves into any year-long contracts that we might not be able to fulfill. However, we went through a period of severely lacking funds because the funds were just not there to pay salaries after the summer. But we accepted that as one of those little sacrifices you have to make.

The following year, we proposed a lot of educational programs and a full year of exhibition programs including another edition of Summer Dreams. What we did not know was that NYSCA's policy towards educational programs had changed, and so about \$50,000 of the \$62,000 we requested was denied. We went to Albany and met with Peter Bradley to explore some of the other directions we wanted to move in and came up with the idea of a resource center like MERC in New York. I believe that Peter had been looking for a group to provide such services upstate and we were fortunate to be in the right place at the right time.

In any case, it wasn't until the tail end of the '74/'75 funding cycle that the grant for the establishment of the resource center (Cinemedia Resource Center) came through, and so the project didn't really get underway until July of '75. Since that time, additional funds have been appropriated towards the support of the center, and we have numerous programs now in operation, all aimed at helping independent filmmakers and at educating novices to become more proficient as filmmakers. For example, we offer a free loan of the full gamut of Super-8 and 16mm production equipment, including double system sync sound in both guages, and we have the most complete post-production facility in upstate New York. We also offer technical workshops that train people in how to use equipment to make films, and Film Art seminars which, through intensive analysis of short experimental and other works, show filmmakers how to use the

basic equipment and techniques at their disposal to make their films more artistically sound.

Of course, the real problem up here is the problem of geography. There is about as strong an independent scene upstate as there is in New York City, but here it's spread over 10,000 square miles. This makes the distribution of services, such as workshops and equipment loans, very difficult. Even worse, there isn't really the sense of a cohesive filmmaking community since everybody is so spread out. These are serious problems that have to be solved. They are important because, if you look at the national picture, you see that there are a lot of regions like ours with a few population centers and a lot of farmland, all spread out over a very large geographic region. **We think of our region as a pilot, since New York State is ahead of most other states in funding projects like Cinemedia Resource Center, and we are working very hard to organize and create communications between filmmakers and film groups in the region.** We are starting to form a Film Circle in every county within our 27-county service region, and when this network is complete, we will be able to distribute services easily and thoroughly across the whole 27 counties we serve. This is a big undertaking, but a necessary one if independent film is going to survive and grow.

We feel very strongly that for the long-term growth of our society it is necessary to begin using moving-picture communications, and what we are doing with Cinemedia is a first step in that direction. Before I go into detail about what I think the future holds for White Ox, Cinemedia, and the independent scene as a whole, I'd like to give a list of all the services our resource center currently provides:

Free loan of Super-8 and 16mm production equipment.

Free access to post-production facilities, including horizontal table, interlock mixing, projection, and dubbing facilities.

Low cost (\$3.00 per night) housing for out-of-town users.

A revolving cycle of production workshops.

A weekly film art seminar (soon we will tape these and distribute them to the film guilds).

Monthly visiting artists, including workshop and lecture oriented sessions within the same weekend.

A bi-monthly "Cinemedia Newsletter", a four page tabloid with a circulation of 6000.

Special seminars in either technical or non-technical aspects of filmmaking (in response to the requests of our constituents).

An active film guild program designed to establish a regional network of filmmaking centers.

A regional co-ordination effort aimed at tying existing local film centers within the region together and to Cinemedia.

The beginnings of a regional film contest, with prizes and everything?

It is appropriate to mention here that these programs are partially funded by the NYSCA and the National Endowment for the Arts. The cooperation of the Film and Media departments of these agencies

and the appropriations they have made for the activities of White Ox have been instrumental in accomplishing the work we are doing here.

* * *

And now to the future.

In watching and working at the growth of Cinemedia (which has definitely been an uphill climb and will continue to be so), several things have become apparent about the economics and kinetics of independent film production. These observations indicate some specific directions we feel will be most productive in achieving the goals (low cost, fast turnaround, high versatility equipment, open and interested distribution markets to provide subsistence and capital for further work, better communications among ourselves, etc.) which will aid independent filmmaking.

First, I think it is important to consider what independent filmmaking really means. **Ultimately, independent filmmaking and public access can and should be the same concept.** Someone with a beef who simply wants to talk in front of a camera would, perhaps, if he or she had had the benefit of a lot of media-communications training in high school, want to make a more elaborate and impactful statement on film. At the present state of the art, because of the high costs and large hassles in production, persons like that, no matter how much innate visual capability they might possess, would be quickly discouraged from trying their hands. As a result, only the most dedicated and/or compulsive people are willing to devote their lives to independent production. Certainly things should be done to make production easier for these independents. But how many other people are out there who would rather write, paint or dance because of the hassles of film production? You really can't blame them; it is a big hassle. **BUT IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THAT WAY.**

I discussed at the beginning of this article the importance of moving-picture communications to our society and to the world as a whole. Let me anchor that point more firmly and expand on it a bit to show **HOW THINGS CAN BE CHANGED.**

Fact: The media are basically storage mechanisms for information, so that it can be broadcast or projected at a later date.

Fact: The communications process in any medium is a process of externalizing (and perhaps encoding) the information from a human mind onto a medium.

Fact: A good 16mm film transmits 24,000 times as much information in a given period of time as does the print medium (based on a reading speed of 300 words per minute, and a "talking head" type image in which only 1% of the information in each new frame is different).

Fact: It is precisely this high information rate that makes production such a pain because it requires money and labor to transfer information. But:

Fact: It is precisely this high information rate that makes moving picture communications the goldmine of resources they are for mankind.

Fact: Current production technology, no matter how sophisticated it may appear on the surface, is really about 30 years outdated. If we are talking about film and art as *information*, then we should be thinking about film production as information-manipulation and not twiddling with cameras and broken wires, replacing fuses, and paying highly overpriced technicians to do the more complex of these manipulations for us (such as optical printing or computer animation).

Fact: The reason the technology is so outdated and expensive is because 99.9% of the total American hardware pool is used by the networks, Hollywood, and other commercial interests, and their profit-margin is so enormous that they don't care if it costs them an extra million or so to produce a film. Thus, the industry has not provided equipment manufacturers with sufficient economic incentive to really get the technology up to date.

The result is economic discrimination against the independent and person-on-the-street (whether intentional or not) and, consequently, a lack of interest in the audio-visual arts by a lot of very creative people. There are other factors making the argument stronger that can also be brought in here, but these facts give the basic picture.

How do we change all this? One possible solution

would be to prevail upon our federal congress to recognize the importance and necessity of independent film and what it can evolve into if given enough funds. Hopefully, the funds would shortly thereafter follow. But what kinds of funds are we talking about—how much? If you talk about the medium with its current tools, you'll need funds for equipment, stock, lab costs, etc., etc. You all know what independent budgets look like. Using New York State as an example, we would need about ten (10) times the amount of funds currently available from NYSICA to make a good beginning. That's about (I believe) \$20 million per year. Multiply by 50 states and you get \$1 billion per year. That's heavy money.

If the feds can pour tens of billions of dollars into energy research, which they've identified as a primary national need, then why shouldn't they do it for film/TV? The media have an enormous impact on our lives; they are the primary sources of food for the mind. So, even if there *should* be \$1 billion a year, we won't get it. The reason is that it's an ongoing, year after year expense, and would continue like the defense budget (God forbid), *ad infinitum*. Not to mention the effect of inflation on our mere \$1 billion. And don't forget that \$1 billion is just a start.

If you look at the technology which supports film production, however, you realize that it doesn't have to be that way. The distribution side is already opening up, due to the advent of cable and video disc. Again, commercial incentive has been the main economic spur to development, so don't look for an upgrade in programming content or better access for yourself. However, a guy I recently met at the National Science Foundation told me that within five or ten years we would have fibre-optic/laser cable networks capable of carrying 500 to 1000 simultaneous channels. That's impressive. At that level, your independent productions might get shown.

Ah, but back to the crucial point: **IF YOU CAN AFFORD TO PRODUCE THEM.** Nothing is being done to upgrade the technology of film production to the level paralleled by distribution technologies such as video disc and fibre-optics. And the industry isn't likely to because they'd just as soon maintain control by keeping the public at a severe economic disadvantage when it comes to A/V art and communications. They got a good ball game going, and despite the fact that the right of free speech is flagrantly violated by lack of adequate public access, they're not likely to give up their game if they can avoid it.

What kind of technology are we really talking about developing here? What kind of production technology? At White Ox, largely under the auspices of the Cinemedia project, we've put together a team of 11 volunteer engineers and computer people to study this problem. **What they tell us is that it is possible with current technology to make a computerized TOOL (you run it, it doesn't run you)** that would cut production costs by at least a factor of 10, increase versatility almost infinitely (since the computer can be almost instantly re-programmed), and decrease turn-around time for a complete complex experimental film *from one year to several days*. The machine would be, essentially, "transparent"; that is, you would not have to fumble with splicing tape, etc. The whole process would be entirely under your control, but all the work would be done by the computer. The manipulations you perform are in the pure information realm and don't require mechanical mechanisms which are slow, clumsy and expensive to operate. Transparency means, essentially, that you could make the film at the speed of your own thought processes, without fumbling with hardware. The only aspect that such a production machine would have in common with conventional production hardware is in the gathering of the raw images. You would use Super-8 or portapak as you wanted. The original would go in one end of the machine. You would twiddle the machine, and the final master would come out the other end. The machine, by the way, would enhance the image quality of the Super-8 or portapak output programs to better than 16mm or 2 inch VTR quality. That's really what updated technology would look like, and the amount of control and versatility would be unbelievable.

A machine to do this would serve 30 users simultaneously, would be located in an access center, or

perhaps a library, and would cost about \$10 million. In a few years, the service could be piped into your home, and in 30 years or so, you could buy one for the price of a moog.

It seems more likely that the government would go for this significant upgrading of the hardware and consequent significant decreasing of production costs instead of that perpetual \$1 billion per year appropriation; first of all, they get hardware for their money and, more importantly, it would be a one-shot expense every 20 years or so rather than every year. Now let's see: 100 of these machines at \$10 million apiece comes out to \$1 billion. So in one year, presuming the prototype were developed, you could build a network of these visual synthesizers across the country. That \$1 billion goes a lot farther than spending it on the present outmoded, highly expensive production technology.

There are two things to be added. First of all, such a center would have staff programmers to work with artists in making new types of image manipulations that had never been made before. Once a new program has been written, it can be easily given to the other 99 centers. So, through group effort, the level of

visual literacy in the country would consequently begin to grow very rapidly.

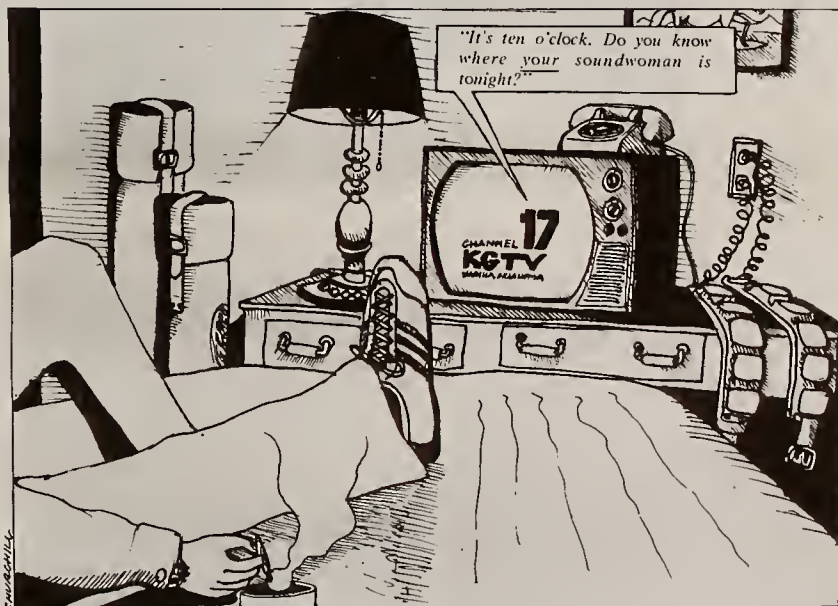
Secondly, the educational wing would have access (perhaps their own set of machines for training purposes) so that within 20 years we would have a youth that was really visually literate, and who could, as they made their way into society, begin to implement highly sophisticated visual communications as part of our daily lives.

That about wraps it up. **The solution to the public access problem, and to your problems as an independent, lies not only in more funds but in better production equipment to keep pace with the rapid technological expansions taking place in the distribution technologies.**

Well, this has been fun writing. By all means, please get in touch—the more feedback, the better. Here is White Ox's address and phone number:

David Tulbert
White Ox Films, Inc.
308 Laburnum Crescent
Rochester, N.Y. 14620

And if you're up this way, call up so we can get together: (716) 442-4080.



Concept by Joel Friedman

WARNING

AIVF warns people who are submitting scripts to be wary of the release form currently being used by the William Morris Agency. Covenants in this release form grant to Morris the non-exclusive right to use any materials submitted to them. The fee to be paid for the materials would be decided on at a later date by an arbiter, calculated on the basis of the fair market value of non-exclusive rights to the materials on the date the release form was signed. The creative artist could encounter difficulty with a producer who, at a later date, wants to acquire exclusive rights to the materials, since Morris already holds non-exclusive

right to his or her script.

AIVF protested to Morris a previous release form nine months ago. That form contained two clauses which we thought unfair to artists: the first clause purported to grant Morris immunity from any claim that Morris unlawfully used the material submitted; the second clause purported to value the artist's material at \$250 in the event the first clause did not hold up in court.

The first release form was unconscionable and utterly unenforceable as against public policy. The new release form is harsh, but it may well be enforceable.

Metroliner

A Review by Charles Levine



I began in the theatre by giving puppet shows of my own devising to every class in the fifth grade at P.S. 76. I also won a Fulbright Scholarship to study Mime, but threw it all aside for film. I have worked for network television (NET, ABC) on both documentary and dramatic films, first as an Editor, then a Director/Producer. "Metroliner" was made with a grant which allowed me freedom to experiment with form and images and to work through ideas in ways that were not possible in my previous television experience. VH

Rain falls on the railroad tracks. Thunder is heard and lightning flashes across the sky. Then, in a series of shots in which rain, fog and steam blend into one great and powerful railroad engine, emerging from a tunnel as if being born, whole, complete in every detail, a resounding triumphal chorus rises on the sound track and Victoria Hochberg's film masterpiece *Metroliner* begins.

In ancient times, the gods were visualized riding chariots across the sky. The place of man-made objects in the human psyche is related to the period in history in which they appear. Cars, rockets and airplanes have today filled some of this psychic space. The railroad train, from its very beginnings in the early 19th century, held a magnetic attraction for the imagination. The movement and power of trains took on meanings above and beyond the practical need to move people and merchandise from place to place.

In both conscious and unconscious ways, trains were identified with the old mythology, but they were also part of a new mythology. The mythology of triumphal technology. Railroad engines were given names such as Jupiter, Mars and Vulcan, a symbolic connection to an old mythology; these same engines represented perhaps the single most advanced accomplishment in the mechanical technology of the 19th century.

A new religion of technology emerged with a transformed and upgraded psychic vision of power and

temples of worship were built all over America. Many of these were styled like Greek and Roman temples and, so that no one would be confused, they were called railroad stations. *Metroliner* shows the railroad station, or what I call temples, in just the right context. The grandeur and sweep of the stairways, the monumental pillars and arches, are like the stage set in the MGM version of *The Wizard of Oz*. In the MGM film, Dorothy and her friends are in the wizard's palace when the voice of Oz is heard and a vision of Oz emerges through a cloud of steam. In *Metroliner*, Victoria Hochberg has succeeded in bringing to life the mythological dream of the railroad train. It is a life that has a ghostly quality to it. Spirits such as those in Dickens's "A Christmas Carol," the ghosts of past, present and future, inhabit the film.

The train rushes forward, leaps across the land in beautiful, effortless strides. The camera angles are varied; our point of view shifts from within to outside the train and to high in the air. The use of different film stocks, such as high-contrast negative, evoke textural variation.

The *Metroliner* is a train which runs between

Boston and Washington, through the heart of Megalopolis. One quality of Victoria Hochberg's film is the visual intensity with which the landscapes of Megalopolis are portrayed. *Metroliner* is a true synthesis of two of the central styles of American film: avant-garde/poetic and documentary. The crisp, clear and honest imagery and editing and the forthright portrayal of the people at work attest to the influence of the American documentary. But as the train seems to become a mythological being and take on a life of its own, *Metroliner* soars into the realm of the poetic film.

The *Metroliner* reaches Washington, D.C., and we see the engineer, documentary-style, in the cab of the train. The film reaches its climax as a mystical super-train consisting of three steam engines abreast, travels right down the center of Pennsylvania Avenue with a Presidential motorcade and a formation of planes overhead. The image is superbly blended with the dome of the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument to become an American capitol of our dreams. This hauntingly beautiful film ends as the engineer checks his watch and departs; for him it was just another work-day.

*I am not a train buff. In fact, the modern *Metroliner* is not even a very beautiful object. But trains move, and this was the starting point for the film. I was interested in the train as a vehicle that might carry me to another realm, and I liked the railroad as a symbol of THE American industry. The film explores the dimensions of an object, revives the ghosts that hang around the Northeast Corridor, and makes a comment about where the free enterprise system has taken us.* VH

Charles Levine has been making films for over fifteen years. (Steps, Horseopera). In 1975, he helped found Independent Cinema Artists and Producers (ICAP).

The Closet Machinist

Modifying a Half-Inch Sony Video Camera

by Ted Churchill

Every time I purchase a piece of film or video equipment the first thing I always want to do is take it home and change it. I don't know whether this is my own personal identity problem or simply a reaction to poor design. I always like to think it is the latter; it is probably a little of both.

To satisfy my custom lust I have amassed over the years a modest machine shop which includes a drill press, hand drill, hack saws, files, nuts and bolts, a machinist's angle, calipers and a vise as well as an assortment of materials from that great place we all love, Canal Street. These materials include all types of rubber, plastic and aluminum to be used for lightweight construction, foam that can be wrapped around things, materials that stick to things, stick to other things, provide a firmer grasp for holding, make the feel of an object softer, etc. etc. I have fabricated a little do-dads for my movie camera for years and have designed and built no less than six or seven different types of handles for it before coming to what I considered to be the right solution.

My enthusiasm for mechanics, design and materials may be common to many camera technicians in film just as electronics seems to be for soundfolks. I confess that I know nothing about electronics and like to keep it that way because it always looked so complicated, because I was always very poor in mathematics, and finally, if I don't know anything about it I don't have to "deal" with it. On the other hand, I consider myself "good with my hands" and have certain strong ideas about design. This background is by way of an introduction to the story of my latest project involving the modification of the Sony one-half inch AV 3450 video camera. (Figure #1.)

To get right to the point, the only fixtures on a hand held film or video camera that belong in front of your face are the lens, the viewfinder and possibly a handle. All the rest of the camera should be somewhere behind you. It has taken film and video camera designers years to finally come to this conclusion. It would have taken less time if the designers had ever used the products they designed. But we all know they don't. They are, however, finally getting the message.

Certain video cameras now have an adjustable viewfinder on the side instead of at the back, and in 16mm, Jp. Beauviala has designed a movie camera which satisfies every design requirement that I could conceive of. The problem is that it will cost you about as much as a modest home in the country.

The Sony AV 3450 video camera has an acceptable design if you're doing home video. If you take the images you shoot more seriously, then it's another story. The first thing I realized after I bought one was that for my purposes the zoom lens that comes with the camera was 1. too limited in the zoom range in both telephoto and wide angle, 2. did not focus close enough and 3. that it zoomed in a different direction than I was used to. Since I have a sizeable complement of 16mm film lenses, I decided to use them on the camera instead. I borrowed a "CA1" (Eclair) to "C" adapter from a friend so the lenses would fit on the Sony camera. This solved my lens problem by giving me a focal length range of 5.7mm to 120mm.

But the utilization of film lenses created yet another problem. The zoom lenses weigh practically as much as the video camera itself, and with them and the camera body all hanging out the front, the weight becomes unbearable in a very short time. A body brace doesn't solve the problem because it constricts movement and is apt to be responsible for the recording of your own breathing on the tape.

So the solution became simply to put the camera body back on the shoulder. This meant that the viewfinder tube would have to be taken out and mounted somewhere forward and to the left of the camera body.

I toyed with the idea of having the viewfinder tube

separate from the body, connected only by a cable which incorporated the high voltage cable and all connecting wires (of which there are about twelve or thirteen). The viewfinder tube could then be mounted to be worn on my head, leaving the camera totally flexible and mobile. I rejected this solution for two reasons. First, a friend had actually done this and reported that the image in the viewfinder was substantially less sharp than it had been originally. Since it is more difficult to find focus with one-half inch video cameras than 16mm film cameras, this solution was unacceptable. Second, the connecting cable would always be vulnerable to damage and that kind of problem I didn't need.

So I decided to keep both the camera body and the viewfinder in one solid (but adjustable) unit.

The design of the housing and support of the viewfinder system had to fulfill several requirements. First, it would have to be in a position far in front of the camera body, but not so far as to enter the frame of the picture if an extreme wide angle lens were used. Second, it had to be mounted firmly but in such a way that the camera could be held under the arm, in the lap or on the ground without losing the ability to look through the viewfinder. Third, the connecting cables and wires would have to be protected from possible damage during use. Finally the whole unit (housing and support) would have to be mounted on the camera body in such a way that it would not only be rugged but also have the capacity to be taken apart without too much difficulty, should the camera need service or repair.

Wisely, I never planned to wire up the modification myself. After some research, I contacted a fellow who was a sound technician and television engineer and who was willing to do the job.

He suggested that I incorporate the connecting wires within the mounting structure to avoid damage (to both the wires and to myself through a shock). He stressed, above all, that my total design must allow him enough room to work at the wiring.

Onward and upward! The first challenge was to find an aluminum box in which to house the viewfinder tube. I found a thin aluminum chassis box at an electronics store, the top and sides of which pulled off in one unit. Perfect. I bought two, in case I screwed up the first one. As it turned out I used both by mounting them bottom to bottom, cutting down the lower one to house the electronics that are part of the viewfinder system directly below the tube in the camera body. The two chassis also gave the whole unit more strength. (Figure 1, #1.)

I incorporated the on/off switch into the housing (Figure 1, #3). This is actually the wrong place for the switch, as it should be in the handle, but it fit so

neatly into the housing that at the time I could not resist putting it there.

Next I cut the eyepiece assembly off the original plastic back plate of the camera body and mounted it on the new viewfinder housing (Figure 1, #9) so that it could be flipped up or not as originally intended.

For the supporting arm of the housing I chose 1" square hollow aluminum tubing out of which I built an "L" coming forward from the top of the camera body and making a turn to the left for 5". At the end of this "L" was mounted the viewfinder housing (Figure 1, #4, 8, 10, 2). The elbow of the "L" had to be reinforced as this was the point of most stress. I cut a hole at the elbow to facilitate the wiring job through the "L" (Figure 1, #10).

The next challenge was mounting the housing and support "L" on the camera body itself. Due to the design of the body this was difficult. The entire electronics mechanism of the camera is mounted on a very small interior chassis and there is very little room inside to work. Furthermore the exterior plastic shell could not support any weight without breaking.

The solution simply became to build an exterior chassis using all the existing screws which held the camera together and which were tapped into the interior chassis. This exterior chassis took the form of an inverted "U" running from the front of the camera body, across the top, and down the back (Figure 1, #11). It is mounted with two screws in the front, one on each side of the lens and two into an aluminum piece which covers the back and becomes part of the "U". On the front right side of the "U" I mounted a right angle which would later become part of the adjustable handle system (Figure 1, #5, 6). On the top of the "U" I mounted two hollow square pieces that were just slightly larger in diameter than the "L" so that the "L" could slide back and forth through them. This in turn permitted the viewfinder housing to move forward and back depending on whether the eyepiece was flipped up or down or should an extreme wide angle lens be used.

Next I mounted the viewfinder housing at the end of the "L" so that it could be turned up ninety degrees to a vertical position and locked into place. The camera could then be used in numerous positions, as well as on the shoulder when the viewfinder was horizontal.

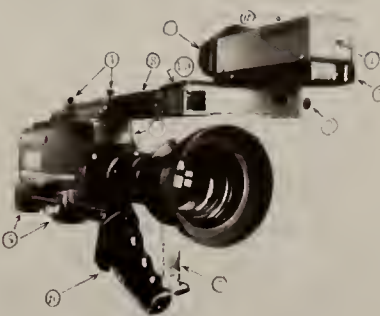
Next problem: the mounting of the handle. Needless to say the original handle had been taken off and this left a reasonably flat surface on the bottom of the camera body with plenty of original screw holes from which to work.

For the handle support I mounted a flat aluminum plate on the bottom and attached to it one of my own special little home-built do-dads which permit a rod to slide through and tighten down. I put another one of these near the front mounted on the right side of the "U" (Figure 1, #5). Through these two I ran an aluminum rod (the same one that keeps your book shelves on the wall). To this I attached a handle from a Bolex 16mm camera which I drilled out to reduce weight (Figure 1, #6). The handle slides back and forth for balance and comfort, depending on one's mood.

Since I had to be able to mount the camera on a tripod (in tired moments) I reinforced the aluminum piece on the left side by drilling the hole about three inches left of center of the camera body at the extreme front. This position for the tripod hole made the camera perfectly balanced when on a tripod, as the viewfinder housing adds a lot of weight on the left and forward.

Time to try it out for balance on the shoulder. No good. The camera had a tendency to fall to the left as a result of the weight of the viewfinder housing.

I decided to add one more piece (a habit I try not to fall into) that would be mounted through the tripod hole left of center, rest just below the neck and provide a little support on the left side. If you have read this far you undoubtedly have been wondering what #7 is and that's it. This piece must be detached when the camera is mounted on a tripod, and that's



Ted Churchill is a cinematographer and the editor of the GAZETTE. They took away his Erector Set when he was a boy and he never recovered.

The Closet Machinist continued

why the habit of mounting pieces after the fact is bad. Aside from that drawback it functions perfectly.

A final word on the wiring. The person who did the job shall remain nameless, because after the wiring was finished he told me that he would not do it again if he had to. At least not on a small camera like mine. I understand. He did a beautiful job; it looked as complicated as open-heart surgery, and the operation was a complete success. I had gotten many opinions that even if it could be done, the image in the viewfinder would not be sharp. As it turned out it is as sharp, if not sharper, than originally.

The wiring took twelve to thirteen hours and cost two hundred dollars. The machining of the structure took, as near as I can guess, a week of solid work on my part as well as more than a little thought. All told it is worth it, except it really should have been done on a color camera. But that's next.

And last, but not least, as you can see, I put my name on it (Figure 1, #12). □

Introduction to Video continued

little time as possible is spent on the expensive quad format. Of course the ¾" "off-line" master is in many instances the final form and there is no need to go to quad.

At the next lower level are the ¾" cassette editing systems. Several of these should be looked at. Most cassette editing right now is done with Sony 2850's. These are high-quality cassette editing decks which feature vertical interval insert and assemble editing and dual audio channels. They can be operated manually or with some sort of automatic console between them to program them. Sony makes the RM 400 which edits accurately to about 5 frames (1/6 second). TRI, a California company, makes the EA-5 system that is frame accurate (1/30 second) and features four search speeds with a visible picture similar to a moviola. A similar system is made by Convergence Corporation. Spectravision and Datavision are two other manufacturers of automatic systems. The TRI, Sony and Convergence units count control track pulses to line up the edits. The Spectravision works from a crystal oscillator for accuracy. The Datavision is a highly sophisticated system that uses SMPTE time code and is the most expensive. Editing with 2850's using the Sony RM 400 runs about \$40/hour. The TRI and Convergence systems run between \$60 and \$75/hour. Rates for the Spectravision and Datavision are unavailable at the present time. For those curious, the 2850's are \$6000 apiece and the RM 400 is \$1000. The TRI and Convergence are about \$6000 apiece. The Spectravision is about \$5000 and the Datavision sells for about \$12,000.

That pretty much covers cameras, decks and editing systems in general use. There are others, but as of now they are not as widely used. Of course, by the time you finish this article, it will all probably be obsolete. □

Ed Lynch continued

human first and intellectual second.

My suggestions for a working definition are spiritual and therefore common, and are extrapolated from the tribal context. Many primitive people believed, and many still believe, that everything releases spirits. Within their daily lives they were, and again in some places are, conscious of the spiritual power and content of the people and objects around them. The witch doctor or medicine man was the person most in touch with the spirits. He or she had a powerful influence over the masks, the dances, the drumming, the paintings, and the construction of tribal rites and ceremonies. Now we are quite willing to call that part of their lives art and steal their objects as well. They, of course, did not have a concept of art. They had a concept of spirits which we have been anxious to call superstition. Their arts worked for them; they were neither decorative (they never would have thought of a

museum) nor locked away. But they were carefully controlled. The painters were not permitted to draw certain shapes unless it was at the right time and the tribe was prepared to receive the spirits that the shapes and colors raised. The "artist" was responsible.

Is it as astonishing to think that everything gives off spirits? I find it logical and satisfying. People are affected by objects, and especially by art. It does something to them. After such an experience they carry something away with them. They are infected as well as affected. It is possible for us to think about the spirits that our films and tapes raise. In fact it is imperative. We must know whether we are raising good or bad spirits, and to be responsible for passing them into the theaters and into the homes to our audiences.

My own feeling is that the greatest art is infused with the highest spirits. We criticize art by saying that it is lifeless or by saying that it does not capture the spirit of the thing that it represents (excuse the assumption). Or we say that it has no power. These are useful spiritual perspectives that can be used by everyone. Unfortunately the history of art criticism is not spiritual but intellectual.

Picasso is supposed to have complained to Malraux that people cannot "see" (my quotes) anymore than they can read Chinese. They go to school to learn Chinese, why can't they recognize their inability to see and begin to study? He is also supposed to have said that he didn't expect anyone to understand his work since he himself didn't understand where many of the images and ideas came from. So, logically, how could another person, no matter how scholarly, who must know him (Picasso) much less well than he knew himself, begin to tell the world about the meaning of his paintings?

The truth of this statement is beside the point for it is a horrible place to begin. If his genius is undeniable, his attitude is unforgivable. All people do "see" in their own way, admittedly with vastly different levels of perception and skill. Few artists would deny that children can "see" even if they lack a visual education and cannot naturally read Chinese. They acquire "lessons" about looking at things as they grow older that are damaging to the natural sensibilities. As treacherous and castrating as it is to insist that people are naturally inadequate to have an art experience, the other statement is actually worse. Picasso would have had to agree that everyone has a mentality and a history. I call it a cultural template. Many of these experiences are common: the physicality of life, the topography of land and water, the character of plants and food and so on. It may not be possible for an artist to tell you the exact source of his or her work, but parts of it may strike familiar chords. At that point the audience is included rather than excluded. The genius of assembly, of selection, of techniques, and of subtleties of a thousand other kinds, may never be understood without a great deal of study and effort. But the art is understood first of all outside of the intellect. It is understood by the child through being naturally receptive, not by being trained.

There is a lesson in the people's choices as even Walter Kerr insisted. They are rarely wrong about a play, and he took his model from the popular acceptance of Shakespeare. I have to agree, though it may take centuries to really know. The Mona Lisa is acclaimed by millions. The Pietà, the David, the thousands of other great works of art evoke powerful, similar reactions in people that cut across cultural boundaries. The vocabulary may be extremely limited, but the experience is not.

Many people love Hitchcock without the foggiest notion of film craft. *The Sound of Music* may be our Keane (the painter of the sad, big-eyed children) but people understand and like it. The spirits are familiar. It reaffirms family, music, loyalty and myth. It confuses people to read that it is a bad film when it makes them feel so good. (David Lean understands that idea, and by now has the confidence to ignore the critics.) They complain of a lack of artistry. They called *Music* a bad example of the art of film. It wasn't. It is a good film, good art. Good low art. The audience must be the final judge, not collectively, but individually. What they receive in spiritual terms is the essence of what they receive in art terms. If they

are taught to respect their own reactions they will be harder to exploit. A personal experience excludes the critic first, allows analysis later.

I am continually crazed by the thoughtless way that we create the world that we live in. It is thoughtless because it does not consider the fundamental effects of the thing, that is, the spiritual or art-of-life consequences. We, or I would rather say they, build one hundred floors exactly like one another straight up. It is an embarrassing homage to one plus one. They have not considered whether people would like to work there, or whether they would like to ride express-train elevators, or whether the capital resources are being fairly and properly used. The same mentality that constructs the terrible steel twins builds shopping centers (malls!), demeans through seductive ads and slick magazines our most beautiful women, uses mother-and-child to sell soap, and a promise of sexual prowess to sell cars. We know all these things, but we have been thinking about them as either inevitable or foolish but not really harmful excesses from the hard-charging business mentality. If we see these excesses as not foolish but damaging, then we have begun to see ourselves as fundamentally spiritual rather than mechanical. But what kind of trouble are we really in?

We celebrate (and only slightly regulate) a vast legitimate drug industry that does not have the decency to make sure that the people taking their drugs are not irreparably injured. We are only now beginning to understand the effects of the Pill. Drugs passed out twenty years ago are isolated as the cause of cancer in children. We put phones in our bedrooms, destroy our privacy and lovemaking, and then follow it with television. We build isolating and polluting cars and then destroy the places they can go by building giant highways to get there. We subsidize bridges and airports without attempting to find out what they do to our communities. We spend vast fortunes perfecting miraculous surgical techniques to repair defective hearts and almost nothing on environment and diet that might tell us why we have defective bodies to begin with. We build cheap, impersonal houses and then sell them as if they were the embodiment of the dream come true. We ask our Native Americans to leave their tents and move into our prefabs. They have the honesty to defecate in the tubs (we heard it on the news!) and we have the audacity to accuse them of being ungrateful and filthy besides. Our own cities are connected to silly vitrolite and water plumbing systems which encourage us to pretend that the flushing of a toilet meant that the "problem" went away. And even with this enormously expensive system we short-circuit it with our dogs who grace the street with the best evidence of cowardly politicians and careless citizens. Our professional reporters shoot thousands of feet of disaster footage while sporting expensive equipment and expense accounts expecting the flood and fire victims will remember that the benefit of exposure to the American TV public is greater than the harm from the caloused indifference of the crews. Peter Davis put into his film, *Hearts and Minds*, that a Vietnamese peasant said, "First they bomb us, then they take pictures of us."

Our bad economic decisions, our inhuman politics, our exploitative television, our violent and sexually explicit movies do not just inhabit the corporate offices, the studios and the theaters. They are ideas, bad spirits, powerful, inflamed things that infect our streets, our homes, and our very own lives. It would be and is a simple piece of logic for a witch doctor: the crazy white man is violating the spirit of life.

A friend of mine told me that she used to work in one of the new giants at 51st Street and Sixth, in a center office with no windows. She rode a crowded subway twice each day, and gulped a little bit of "fresh" air between the stairway and her stone and steel tower. After a while she found that as she climbed out of the subway she began to cry. Her friends told her that she was too sensitive. Perhaps by putting our city into the hands of real estate speculators, engineers and accountants we have constructed a city for which in the long run we are all too sensitive.

You see, buildings are not just buildings. Paintings are not just paintings, and television and film are not just media. Everything that we build, everything that we create, everything that we live with becomes day by day, hour by hour, our unshakable spiritual partners.

If not in spiritual terms, what are the words which we will use to discuss and define our work? Technological? Financial? Structural? Historical? We could leave it up to the critics to tell us what we are doing, but they would not be very helpful. They have been writing ads for the industry by and large, and there is little evidence that they have managed to uplift the form. In the tribal context, art was not defined. The artifacts that they used in their daily lives were understood to be spiritual. They were useful to create and control spirits. We would do well to be able to do the same.

Is the world getting too difficult to stomach? Wassily Kandinsky, the painter, said that everything dead quivers... everything has a secret soul. Another painter, de Chirico, said that he tried to deal specifically with the spirits that a painting could evoke. The alchemists said that there is spirit in matter. This is just a smattering of much more evidence about spirit and art that exists for the student and to which you may go for additional research.

Spirits do have religious implications hanging all over them like vines on an English mansion. Our technological approach to life tells us to be more interested in the "proof" of plant energy through Kirlian photographs than to listen to the farmer explain how good it makes him feel to walk through a field of corn. A friend of mine suggested the word energy instead of spirits, either high or low, good or bad. I find it to be weaker, a less accurate substitute. Energy connotes something measurable, something scientific. Spirits are not. Energy means power. Spirits mean life. And they connect us to history and to a natural, life-oriented concept of art.

In primitive cultures spirits are good and bad. Good spirits are encouraged. They are a vital part of a happy life. Too many bad spirits cannot be a part of a happy life. They cause misery, suffering and death. Very bad spirits must be exorcised.

I first became interested in the Indian and tribal approach to art when shooting on *Hearts and Minds* at a Navajo reservation in the Southwest. We had been assured by a member of the family that we would be able to film a special ceremony. A young brave who had been expected to be a tribal leader had been to Viet Nam. On his return he had been unable to enter the family again. Their understanding of the problem was that while there he had been infected by bad spirits which still lived inside him. These spirits were destructive to him and to the tribe. "He never used to act that way before." An ancient exorcist ceremony would rid him of the bad spirits and return him to his family and to the tribe. After three days we left without having filmed the ceremony. There had been an understandable difference in intentions—our own ceremony was too remote and complicated to integrate into theirs without being destructive.

Although I cannot testify to the effectiveness of the ceremony, it seemed to be tried and true, one that had the confidence of the tribe. The beauty of the ritual, as little as I was able to see, was that they knew what had to be done down to the last eagle feather, to achieve the desired results. Everyone believed that the ceremony would work.

Unlike us, their most powerful leaders were also their healers. Our most skillful head doctors, our psychiatrists, have the unenviable job of patching up our psychic wounds when oddly enough they have no power, and have not demanded the power to change the conditions under which the people become mentally ill. Their skills may be in dispute, their theories are vague, and they function as little better than litter bearers. Their advice is generally adaptive.

So what will be our "message" as motion picture artists? Will our art function toward a spiritually healthy and progressive American Tribe? Can we think and speak about the effects of good and bad films and tapes? Can we talk about the damaging effects of pornography without being afraid that we will be accused of favoring censorship? Can we insist that the individual viewer has the right to his own art experience while we are still dependent on the critics to inform the public about the existence of our work? Can we ask the critics to consider the spiritual emanations from films and tapes to be more important than the intellectual content? Will we ask our-

selves what spirits our work raises? Can we say that *The Exorcist* is a dangerous movie because of its carelessness of its impact on the community? Can we work toward the separation of a legitimate theatrical construction and the deliberate poisoning of an audience? Aren't there at least a thousand similar questions that we should ask ourselves, the networks, and the major studios about the power of our infectious, pervasive medium and its effect on us, our parents and our children?

We have watched some of the extraordinary exchanges between the titular government in Washington and the real government, the Networks. We have seen flinty-hearted executives say that they do not know if there is a relationship between the violence on their programs and the violence in the streets. They both embarrass us and infuriate us. We know better. We have watched the frightening parallels. We know that our children, the kids on the street, and even ourselves mimic what we see on the video box. Our friends get sand-bagged bathing suits after seeing *Jaws*. We laugh it off and then read that Miami Beach geriatrics have stabbed a baby whale to death with their beach umbrellas when many times in the past they had pushed the poor beached babies back into the ocean. The umbrella bloodletting was a spontaneous, and probably unsuccessful attempt to exorcise the ads and the movie.

Yes, we are exploitable. We are and can be infected by what we see and hear. Highly skilled Madison Avenue socio-psychological vivisectionists know how to locate, isolate, and use against us weakness after weakness, vulnerability after vulnerability, until we carry more of their messages than we do of our own. Their real enemy is the natural man who doesn't need enough to support the consumer economy and their elegant life-styles. We have the beginning, and, I passionately hope for, the eventual fall of our over-consumptive, wasteful economy. It is an international disgrace anyhow. We need to have, and we probably will get, a painful awakening. I can only hope that the pain will be shared more equally than it is now. For that to happen our leaders would have to begin to listen to spiritual advisors, not just economic advisors.

The tribal artist, though unnamed in that role, and never just functioning as such, was at the focus of the spiritual health of day-to-day life. Perhaps that is the role that many of us wish to pursue. The difficulty of assuming that "job" is compounded by the fact that we are a generally splintered group where there is neither the resources to do what we now know how to do, nor the vocabulary and vision to think about doing something new.

How could we get in touch with our personal and national spirits? First we must acknowledge the necessity to do so. We can ask ourselves and other artists questions about our work from that perspective. As independents our choices cannot be any simpler than our culture, no more pure than the Mississippi. But we are and will remain victims of the "culture" as long as we do not have a vision, as long as we do not have reliable magic of our own. We are moving, as we must, but we will not be a movement, we cannot be a force for change without the power that comes from understanding what we are all about. We need the historical energy that comes from ritual and the knowledge that comes from catechism. Right now we are rather rudderless. We have lost the mandate that came from the Woodstock magic. We could not raise a table with an anthem. The only real ritual that we know, and the one that we are more and more forced to use is, "... the way the industry works."

The final, most brutal American criticism is that it doesn't work. It could be the seed for real revolution. We cannot expect a country that has built its "greatness" on business and life-style to suddenly throw some huge switch and introduce spiritual and artistic priorities.* No one can know how things will change

*I am sure that if our corporations believed that employee efficiency would be increased, they would build meditation booths in their lavatories. I suspect them of doing motivational research to figure out a way to replace the Horatio Alger myth with one that is a little bit more futuristic, like *Citigo*. How could something that worked for so few motivate so many for so long?

any more than the way of a snake on a rock. I used to imagine some kind of revolution. Now it is more of a distant drum, an old fantasy.

We must work to make sure that the hidden costs of our technologies, including motion pictures, are not the greatest ones: the costs in human terms. It is easy, and therefore tempting to admit that the lawyers, mechanics and accountants know better than we do. But we have learned and are learning that their cynical pragmatism can bring a slow, anesthetic death of the spirit that is just as crushing as a boa constrictor and just as paralyzing as a hatchet to the spine.

Change is inevitable. We must participate and not be victimized. We have the advantage of expertise in a most powerful communicator and art form. It is our technology that is constructing our future just as surely as if the TV shows and movies were giant I-beams being lifted into place to build the house in which we all must eventually live. How can we afford to create such a monstrous structure with endless energy that will be so much about our future lives without at least a vision, a clear, simple, believable idea? We can't, of course.

My nightmare? That we, as a western, white culture, are lost, blinded, staggering around in a vast technological zoo, collecting wound after wound, tearing our way out of one mistake after another, looking every bit like a Mack Sennett comedy and dying every bit like real life.

But my days have power over my nights and my nightmares. A graceful movement, a well-made tool, the laughter of a child—how can this not be art? How can it not be a lesson in the art of living? We have a serious and difficult challenge to enter and work within a life-giving process. We must understand the entire exploitative, technological and social power of our motion pictures so that we can return them to our audiences with spiritual and magical awareness. It can change their lives and ours as well. It must.

I believe in a new time, a different way of working, sharing, and being. As independents we must have the patience and tenacity to insist on and achieve our own visions, images and sounds. We must rely on our own sensitivity and creativity because it is the source of our personal, artistic and cultural power. We need funding structures that are sufficiently visionary, cooperative projects, and working sets and location crews that develop humanity as well as efficiency. We need exhibition houses and distribution systems that will help us to reach new audiences as well as introduce present audiences to new ideas. The staggering cost of our art to us is miniscule next to the overwhelming cost of our national film-and-television business.

In many ways we have managed to free ourselves from the problems of raw survival that were, and in some places still are, the daily bread of tribal life. It was a bondage, a true blood-wedding of the people to their animals and their land. But if we are more mechanically free, that does not mean that through ignorance or carelessness we can allow our own "marriages" to be bloodless. What good are our own great "achievements" if we don't care about them? What good are mammoth steel towers if they don't give us the joy of a good, old-fashioned barn building? What good is box-office when it is exploitative rather than sharing? How can we congratulate ourselves on ten million dollar pictures that play to packed houses or television shows that command millions of living rooms unless we know that they give life and not just another lesson in spiritual disease.

We cannot allow the art of life to die within us and around us just because we have not taken the time to think about our work. We must connect to new ideas and spiritual attitudes about what we do. We know that we must bring our work to the people. We must do it with vision. We can be the motion picture with doctors, medicine men and women, and we can ignite the imagination of our audiences. I believe it will happen. It will be a time of special magic on the silver and phosphor screens.

The old, battered American Eagle must surrender to the older, much wiser Great Spirit to spawn a celebration which will thunder with the power of giant drums, the freedom of tribal dancing, and the electricity of new, hot blood. You better believe it. □

Letters to the Editor: Early Submissions

Editor, Independent Gazette:

In the November 17th, 1975 issue of the *Village Voice*, I noticed this ad: I would very much like the experience. Any tips for a prospective employee?

—Hopeful

the village VOICE, N.Y.
EXPER THEATR ELECTRICIAN
Needed immediately for Off Broadway
Call evenings 251-9289
FILM APPRENTICE PROGRAM in fea-
ture
film studio, 6 mos required & \$200
deposit. No Pay. Send resume: Box 8037
V.V. 80 University PL, NYC, 10003
FULL TIME Students OK, P/T
Take orders for household prod. co.
\$4.50 hour potential
1111 FR BRUSH 682-8166

PART 1

Dear Hopeful,

Good luck! Just check with counsel beforehand to make sure you're not contravening the emancipation proclamation.

Editor, Independent Gazette:

I heard somewhere that during the filming of a low-budget feature in New York last year a stuntman was required to crawl across a parking lot on his hands and knees with his face on fire and fall into the East River in the middle of winter. Do people really do those kinds of things for a living in movies?

—N.B.

Dear N.B.,

First of all, it's *stuntperson*. Second (in answer to your question) they don't. It's all done at the optical house.

Editor, Independent Gazette:

A friend of mine was told by a friend of hers that he knew some guy (I guess an experimental filmmaker) who baked a roll of film in the oven after he had sprinkled some oregano on it. I think this is very far out but I'm wondering, was it any good (as a film)?

—Ben Gould

Dear Ben,

Apparently the film was quite good except that it was, of course, a one shot deal. At the end of the roll all the emulsion from the film had piled up in the gate of the projector.

Not a Pretty Picture continued

ings on a shoot can ruin everyone's spirit and, after all, spirit is mostly what low-budget films are made of. Editing

My final advice is that it is very important to try to have a sufficient budget for editing. We did, and that kept the final cost down, as the editing didn't drag on forever.

Finally, I would just like to say that despite the fact that low-budget films are limiting in many ways, they are also freeing. Many new things can be tried in a low-budget film that you would never dare do with more money riding on it. Many new directors and actors, technicians and designers start this way. I think that when all of us, including critics, look at a film such as *Legacy* and saying it's not like a Hollywood feature, we should start by saying that it's new and interesting, and that it's phenomenal that it was ever made at all! Though a comparison between *Lipstick* and *Not a Pretty Picture* in terms of subject matter is obvious, they are films designed to fit completely different budget scales and to do completely different things. *Not a Pretty Picture* was intended to break new ground in terms of subject and work. For many of us, it did just that. □

Hilary Harris continued

exposure and one for the interval between frames on the camera. Then, in addition, I mounted the whole camera on a tripod head which was geared at 27,000 to 1 reduction ratio so that it's actually capable of one revolution of the camera in three days. I can go that slow with it. But I can also go... I've forgotten what the maximum speed on it is... but it's something like one revolution in three minutes.

TC: Actual time?

HH: Yes. For instance, I have a chart... it's really a nice motor, by the way, a DC with a solid-state control, a sophisticated SCR control, and a dial so you can set up the exact speed of the motor and know that it's going to be at that speed... so I have a chart, and I can set it up so that I know it will do a 90-degree pan within six hours. I can track shadows. I can figure out the exact speed I need to track shadows, or track a slow-moving ship, or clouds... I've done some nice things with clouds, but I haven't used them in the film. There are a lot of potentials for the rig which I haven't explored yet.

In addition to the panning and tilting, I put a small geared DC motor on the zoom, but it's not as sophisticated as the other ones. It works on a pulse system where every time an interval is over and ready to take the next frame, or rather at the end of the interval, the zoom motor will pulse for a predetermined amount of time so I can get very small movements that way. I can't gear that motor down slow enough.

I don't know how much you want me to go on about these technical things.

TC: I think that's pretty solid on what the technical thing was. It's just that, as I said, in stop-motion films where an animation stand is not used, you don't see many camera moves. In *Organism* those moves look easy because the viewer gets used to the rhythm of the stop-motion. In actuality, though, those moves are very difficult to do.

I don't want to put the thrust of the interview into a cinematographer's perspective, as is my tendency, because I do love gadgets and innovations, and things like that, but I'm wondering if there are some things you could elaborate on that would add a little more depth to what you've discussed so far.

HH: Sure. I could just say a few things about the techniques. You have to do, for instance, a cushioning of movement at the beginning and end, and that's one of the trickier aspects. My rig is sort of semi-automatic. Once I set it up, like for tracking a shadow, I can leave it for several hours while it's shooting, but when there's an exposure change or a cushioning of the movement at the beginning and the end of the pan, I have to be there to do that manually. I worked out a slide rule that showed me the relationships of the interval to the amount of screen time versus the amount of time taking place in front of the camera and the compressions ratio that that gives you. I thought that would actually be a nice device to produce and make available to people who want to get into stop motion. That's one of the things about this kind of work—you have to decide on a whole new element in your photography, which is how fast you want to interpret, what speed you want the scene to go at. Usually it's just exposure and focus that you have to think about and not the speed of stuff. I've done a lot of experimenting and obviously have my own recommended speeds for things. I thought that might be a useful thing for other people who want to use the medium... to know that if you want clouds to come by fairly fast, you use this kind of an interval. If you want ships to look funny, you use this kind of interval. You can make them look funny or you can make them look faster.

Anyway, the exposure thing is something else that's really hairy. I don't know, I feel like talking about it for just a second because I know you would appreciate this problem, of how, when the sun, for instance, starts coming up, let's say you're shooting a night scene... I always have trouble describing this problem. What you've got, basically, at night is the land lit from the light, and as dawn arrives, the first thing that happens is that the sky begins to get a little light. And there's a point at which you've got to decide what you're going to expose, if you're going to expose the sky or the land. If you expose the sky, then the land tends to disappear too quickly. It's a compromise

situation. I guess it's going to be hard to describe. It becomes a silhouette. Then, when the sun comes up... of course it depends on the cloud cover and what not... it's kind of disconcerting to have the land go black and just see the sky. So there's always a problem of what you're going to use as your reference point for the photography. What I found was when the sun came up, it just made everything so bright that I was looking into the sun and it would destroy the scene. I had to zoom in on the land and then I would be able to maintain the exposure. It was interesting to be able to make those decisions while shooting because you have those few seconds between where you can decide which way you're going to go. You may suddenly decide to zoom in. It's kind of hairy and fascinating. But also there's an interval change on these things which is something for the people who are interested in that kind of thing... like if you run a scene all night, well that's, you know, eight or ten hours. In the winter, it's certainly more like twelve to fourteen hours. And if you use the same interval at dawn and dusk, your dawn and dusk goes by like that. So I changed the interval. It's one of those aesthetic interpretations, because the dawn and dusk are the most fascinating times when you see that change and the beauty of the shifting of the light. I changed the interval at that point. I get much more, and it's less compressed.

During an all-night scene, you might be shooting an interval of ten minutes between frames and then when dawn comes, it might come all the way down to thirty seconds during and between frames. You're able to appreciate the changes that happen at dawn and dusk. It's the most interesting part. I'd like to go to the North Pole sometime and track the sun and be able to watch the rotation of the earth underneath the camera because you would be right at the axis point. And if you could make the reference to the sun as a stationary object, you could then zoom back and see the earth rotating underneath. I wonder whether I'll ever get a chance to do that.

TC: I think that's the kind of thing you have to have \$100,000 you can piss away on commissions and do it. That brings to mind something I wanted to ask that I thought was interesting: what is it like and what do you think about when you're on those buildings for a lot of time? And when you were shooting, you probably didn't go away for coffee. What is that experience like? It's one thing to shoot a commercial and keep going crazy because the art director is an asshole and telling you that the camera doesn't look level. It's another thing to be up there for hours and hours, and it's just like spaceville. So I'd like you to describe that.

HH: Well, I had a marvelous opportunity for one thing with the Empire State Building. They lent me an office for a few weeks and I would just go up with my sleeping bag and stay there... hole up... and it was beautiful, like you're really in a high place. Once you get going, you know you have lapses in between. You get the camera going. It's really an odd sense of power, or fear. I really get a kick out of the sense of power, having this thing going, realizing that I'm capturing something really unique. It's clicking away, and the photography is really weird. Once you've got your parameter set, you know you're going to get the picture right. I mean, things can go wrong. You always wait to see the rushes. But I've gotten so that I really can count on the damned thing coming out. It's really a nice feeling to sit back and hear those frames clicking off and realizing that you can make the changes and make the adjustments necessary and feel that time going by and know that it's all going to be compressed down into this intense few moments on the screen. Other than that, I don't know. Also, the accidents that happen are fun. I caught a fire up there on the Empire State Building without expecting it. Luckily, the camera wasn't tied up. I also had two cameras. I had a little Eyemo with another type of release device on it.

TC: Did you leave the camera alone for long periods of time or did you feel you had to stay there?

HH: No. That was really nice, like on that pan on the shadow. I got that going in the morning and I knew there was nothing to do the whole day unless the clouds suddenly came over and it really got dark, not just a few clouds you wouldn't have to make any adjustments for. So I was running around town doing

errands and once in a while I would look up at the Empire State Building and realize that I was clicking away... it was really nice. Actually, I got too carried away with it and got back a little bit late on one of the shots. I would have liked to have tilted up a little sooner. What I was doing was tilting up as the sun went down... I would tilt up and I caught the moon rising. That was frustrating, not knowing exactly when the moon was coming up, because I hadn't figured that out exactly. I wanted a big close-up of the moon, with the 250 zoomed out all the way, as it emerges out of the smog and it's just a big orange ball. It's those first few seconds or minutes that are really strange. All you notice is some weird thing in the sky that gradually becomes the moon. I had to shoot that a little wider than I would have liked, not knowing exactly where that moon was going to come up. But, no, there's no reason to be there. I just locked the door and left.

It's funny, that very thought made me think of hitch-hiking, because you can't predict what's going to happen exactly. You don't know what clouds are going to float across or what ships are going to come up the river or planes are going to streak across the sky. So it's like sitting back and letting it happen. And somehow that freedom is like hitch-hiking—you don't know how far you're going to get that day. You sit back and you're at the graces, or mercy, of whatever the momentary decision is of somebody coming by deciding to stop or not.

Also, another type of shooting is the demolition of a building, say, or the construction of a building. I've done a few of those. They're not all successful; I mean, they're really hairy because of the light changes that happen. Every day, from one to the next, the colors change, the clouds change. I've never got an automatic exposure thing set up. But even so, it wouldn't solve the color change problems. Maybe if you did an optical printing job and you did color corrections on each frame, it could be done reasonably smoothly, but I've never gotten into it that deeply. But there, you pin up a camera in somebody's window and ask him if you can leave it there for an extended period. Plug it in and just go and change the film every few weeks, and keep recording that you've done that. A lot of editing... Pat did some of that... the worst kind of editing, cutting out bad frames and selecting certain parts of the day just to hold, and cleaning up a scene that's messy because of a lot of bad weather or something like that.

TC: What was her involvement in the project?

HH: She helped me with some editing problems like that and mixing the tracks, putting together some of the tracks, which is fairly complex. During the brain analogy of the city... that's one of the analogies that interests me the most. If you study the brain, you realize that there is an incredible amount of activity going on in our heads that we're totally unaware of. It's a highly active electro/chemical device that is operating whether we're asleep or awake. Our consciousness only takes a small part at a time, and we can tap in and remember this or observe that, and go back and forth in time. I make that analogy between those kinds of services that the brain gives us to the services of the city. We can jump on the subway and go up and send a telegram or pick something up. The city is all laid out in this random access, like this random access device. The grid is very convenient, very efficient for finding our way and selecting a specific point out of a great many possible inputs. The brain is actually like that. It has grid structures in it, highly organized groups of nerves and whatnot. I thought that was a funny analogy. It's a hard one to get across to some people. Not everybody gets it.

TC: What is the analogy in the film? What is the macrophotography?

HH: Some of it is slime mold. When you see those little bits of little single-celled animals sort of moving along tracks, that's a slime mold colony. There are close-ups of blood streams in a living hamster—it's a hamster cheek pouch. To do that photography, they drugged a hamster and stretched out its pouch under the microscope. It was a doctor up at Boston University who did that beautiful photography. I mean, he was kind of an unconscious artist... or maybe he was conscious of it... I don't know, but it's beautiful stuff.

Then there's another shot that's symbolic of the

whole film. I don't know if you remember those thin, light blue structures that were kind of long, thin things with granules moving around them back and forth, but I make an analogy between that and highways. But they're actually the legs of a parasite that lives inside the stomach of a termite. I can't remember the name of the particular animal, but that parasite is really not a parasite... it's a symbiotic relationship. He produces enzymes that permit the termite to digest the wood. They're discovering in biology... some theories are developing... that a lot of the complex animals were built out of small animals getting together into these symbiotic relationships, because at times these little parasites lose their legs and they float around almost like separate animals and come together. I don't know enough about it to talk too intelligently, but it is interesting.

TC: There is a negative side of shooting a film with the stop-motion perspective of *Organism*.

HH: Yes. I've had the experience of a certain number of people really getting overwhelmed, getting the feeling that they were just trapped in a mechanism. You can make that interpretation or you can sort of realize that you have a separate identity but that you are embedded in this other thing and that it's an extraordinary mechanism. Of course, you can take it or leave it. To some extent, as individuals, we can make that decision. Like the city is such an entity, such a thing in itself, it's really hard to imagine everybody just splitting. Yeah, I'm afraid it's here to stay. I think we have to make it better. It's possible, and that's what makes it interesting.

I also show this film with *The Nuer*, which is a study of an African people, because these are my two most recent films. *The Nuer* is a 75-minute study of these people who live in what we would call a very primitive way. They live very close to their cows and they have no tools or technology other than a very simple hoe to help them with the corn. They crush corn with a heavy piece of wood and so forth. It's very peaceful there. In other words, I discovered a kind of sense of peace that I had never felt before, not since I was a baby. And I came back with it; it was in my body. I remember getting off at the London airport and just looking around and realizing that I was a different person. I kept that, really, for two, three weeks. And I still know it. But our society is so incredible in terms of the number of inputs, the number of choices, the number of things we get accosted by or confronted with. It's very hard to have that sort of sense of unity and cohesion about it all. That's why I'm doing this New York film. I've also had this experience with the Navajoes out in New Mexico years ago, sensing that they had this incredible power, hearing them singing out at night around a huge bonfire, and sensing that their connection with their surroundings... a transcendence... was a very high experience, a sort of sense of unity.

Another thing that happened to me happened in Africa. I picked up *Newsweek* magazine when I was there, sort of in the middle of my stay, and I just looked it over and that's when I had the sense of the number of inputs that we seem to cram into ourselves. You know, we've gotten all these incredible new tools of communication and distribution... basically it's communication. We're a little overwhelmed by it, I think, and we need to have another perspective. The idea behind *Organism* is not that we're entrapped in this device but that we're a part of it, and that if we can see that, we can see we're part of it. We can see the whole thing and can realize that we're all people with human needs who are creating this and making it happen. We can then begin to transcend all of this jangling input and begin to let things fall into place, into different priorities, and begin to see the beauty of it and the relationship that we have with it. That kind

of recently emerged as just where I've been moving and going, overall, and how I hope to achieve that idea. And I think that an artist basically has that responsibility to take, to reflect his environment in a more comprehensible fashion. Suzanne Langer talks a lot about the function of art being the creations of feeling images upon which we base our vision of what life is, and that art is a collected knowledge of man's understanding of the subjective world. It's not a staid, rigid thing as the objective sciences. Even they change.

We're really suffering, you know, and the scientists are suffering today trying to understand the world because they don't have solid, feeling images of what it is. And this holistic philosophy is an attempt to see where we are in a new perspective because we've run a little bit out of control.

TC: How do you spell "holistic," and what is it? The "hole" meaning the "whole"?

HH: Yes. Weirdly enough, "holistic" is spelled h-o-listically. And I don't know what the reason is. That's weird, but it is the study of wholes. And people in anthropology have done some work in this area. This article of mine quotes a few people like Paul Weiss who said that we're learning more and more about less and less, and that that's one of the big dangers, that we have to somehow get broad pictures and see where we are.

TC: What article is that?

HH: I have that two page thing—you must have seen it. It's about the communications process between one culture and another. As soon as you go to another culture, you are an instrument for absorbing information. Indian anthropologists from India would go and probably see quite a few different things that were of interest to them. And each of us individually would see different things. The point is that when you're there looking, you're already interpreting, and then, when you're photographing, you're interpreting even more. And I think you have to take responsibility for that, you have to say that you're making choices and you're making a statement about these people, and that, after all, is what is valuable. You're not making a report for God or for somebody on Mars. I bring that up because you could get bogged down in trying to be objective and precise, and I don't think that's the point. That's all I'm trying to say.

TC: Yes. I think that one of the reasons you can't do that is because their culture tends to be much more subjective and contains all those things that are counter to that idea (objectivity and precision). I was just shooting in Mexico—a very isolated tribe. Unless you can participate on the level they're participating on, in a sense, you... if you decide you want to be objective... miss the boat because that is exactly what it isn't. It's like trying to describe a color film in black and white. It's very difficult because there are contradictory elements. Most of what the upwardly mobile segment of our society deems valuable is inherently destructive to the Indian culture. So in a sense, you really do have to go out of the way. And fortunately, on the one hand, I've done enough psychedelic drugs so that I understand what that experience is like in terms of my own culture, and I can start to extrapolate that in terms of theirs... I would prefer to see animals and gods. I do see them, so I can be very sympathetic on that level and certainly very subjective. But it was incredible because I've never done a thing like that, never been in a film situation like that before, and it was really extraordinary.

HH: How long were you there?

TC: I was actually only with them for two weeks, a very short period of time. Most of the time, I was going in and out.

HH: Is that the state of Sonora?

TC: I really can't say a lot about it at this time. Anthropology, and especially anthropological filmmaking, is more competitive than I could have imagined. It really can be like one newspaper scooping another with a hot story.

HH: Right.

TC: I keep a lot of humorous elements about it in terms of their perspective and mine. When they saw the amount of hair I had on my body, they wanted to burn it off. It's hard to go back and forth between that experience and living in New York.

HH: Yes... it's quite a nice challenge. □

ASSOCIATION OF
INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.
published by the



50¢

Journal of Independent Film and Video Artists

The Independent GAZETTE

*Made possible by a grant from the
New York State Council on the Arts.*

**The
Independent
GAZETTE**
Journal of Independent Film and Video Artists

75 Horatio Street
New York, New York 10014